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# Anti-Jewish Racism

## Exploring the Swedish Racial Regime

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# Anti-Jewish Racism

## Exploring the Swedish Racial Regime

HANSALBIN SÄLTENBERG
GENDER STUDIES | FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES | LUND UNIVERSITY

What are central aspects and expressions of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden today? What can this tell us about the nature of the Swedish racial regime? These are two of the questions guiding this study, which explores anti-Jewish racism as a structural phenomenon inherent to Swedish society.

While research often has separated the study of anti-Jewish racism/antisemitism from other racisms, this thesis is located within the field of critical race studies to explore anti-Jewish racism as part of larger social and racialised structures. Theoretically framed by a feminist and antiracist gaze that locates Sweden and constructions of "Swedishness" at the core of the analysis, it employs a perspective on anti-Jewish racism as a relational and dynamic social phenomenon, developing a critical analysis of the Swedish racial regime.

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# Anti-Jewish Racism

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## Exploring the Swedish Racial Regime

Hansalbin Sältenberg

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**Abstract**

This study explores anti-Jewish racism as a structural phenomenon inherent to Swedish society. While research often has separated the study of anti-Jewish racism/antisemitism from other racisms, this dissertation is located within the field of critical race studies to explore anti-Jewish racism as part of larger social and racialised structures.

The study is theoretically framed by a feminist and antiracist gaze that locates Sweden and constructions of "Swedishness" at the core of the analysis, enabling a perspective on anti-Jewish racism as a relational and dynamic social phenomenon. Methodologically the study is inspired by a qualitative tradition, situated at the crossroads of in-depth interviews with self-identified Jews on experiences of anti-Jewish racism and Jewish identity, discourse analysis of media debates, film analysis, and participant observations.

The dissertation explores the entanglements of anti-Jewish racism with notions of "Swedish exceptionalism", "Swedish gender equality", the categories of Protestantism and secularism, and racism against other "Others" within what is referred to as the Swedish racial regime. By doing so, the thesis expands the field of critical race studies in Sweden to incorporate an analysis of anti-Jewish racism as a social phenomenon, but also develops a critical analysis of the Swedish racial regime through a specific focus of anti-Jewish racism.

The study illuminates that migration from the Global South is often portrayed within hegemonic discourses as a racist threat against Jews, obscuring Swedish anti-Jewish racism. At the same time, the important demographical shifts that have occurred in Sweden due to this migration have rendered Jews "whiter" in relative terms, and the pressure to adapt to Protestant-secular norms of Swedish "sameness" has decreased, opening up for demands of recognition and Jewish visibility. However, Protestant-secular norms regulating Swedish society confer the category of Jews to a position of conditional "Swedishness", with public display of Jewishness creating instances of Swedish white discomfort. Thus, the category of Jews embodies a position of ambivalence in the Swedish racial regime, subjected to processes of racialisation but also relative racial privilege. Moreover, this ambiguity occurs in a context of a dynamic of "care" towards the Jewish "Other", shaped through the perceived threat of the Muslim "Other", partly reducing the category of Jews to a position of victimhood, while producing an image of Sweden as a progressive and "tolerant" nation, disavowing the ongoing exclusion of those categorised as "different" from Swedish Protestant secularism.

The study suggests that challenging the demands for Swedish "sameness" and the dismantling of hegemonic and racist notions of "Swedishness" would open up for greater possibilities of lives beyond racism.



**Key words:** anti-Jewish racism, antisemitism, racism, Sweden, Swedishness, Swedish exceptionalism, Swedish gender equality, nation, nation-state, Protestantism, secularism, religion, whiteness, Jews, Jewishness, critical race studies

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# Anti-Jewish Racism

## Exploring the Swedish Racial Regime

Hansalbin Sältenberg

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Anti-Jewish racism: beyond the extreme and the marginal

During the last few years, there has been a number of violent attacks, framed through anti-Jewish racism, both in Sweden and in other parts of the Global North. For example, at the beginning of 2015 there was an attack against a kosher supermarket in Paris, France (BBC News Jan. 14, 2015), and a shooting outside a synagogue in Copenhagen, Denmark (BBC News Feb. 15, 2015). In 2018, there was an attack against a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (New York Times Oct. 27, 2018), and in 2019 another attack against a synagogue in Poway, California (NBC San Diego Oct. 4, 2019), a synagogue shooting in Halle, Germany (BBC News Oct. 11, 2019), and defacing of graves at a Jewish cemetery in eastern France (BBC News Dec. 4, 2019). All these attacks were heavily condemned by leading political actors and led to public discussions about contemporary and pervasive antisemitism.

In Sweden, there have been various cases of violent attacks or threats thereof, also expressed through anti-Jewish racism. For example, in December 2017 there were attacks against the Jewish cemetery in Malmö (Monikander and TT Dec. 9, 2017) and the synagogue in Gothenburg (Canoilas and Ohlsson Dec. 9, 2017). In 2018, the Jewish association in the town of Umeå in northern Sweden found itself obliged to dissolve due to continuous threats (Sedehi June 5, 2018), a neo-Nazi group threatened and targeted Jews during a major political gathering in Gotland (Sherman and Enander July 10, 2018), and there was an arson attack against the home of a Jewish politician in Lund (Gjöres Oct. 10, 2018). In Gothenburg and Malmö, there have also been cases in recent years where public buildings have been vandalised with swastikas and other Nazi and antisemitic symbols (*Malmö stad* Mar. 17, 2021; *SVT Nyheter* Dec. 10, 2018). Moreover, in 2015 Swedish authorities announced an increase in reported hate crime against Jews (Brottsförebyggande rådet 2015), mirrored in a later European report on increased fear of antisemitism among Jews across the continent (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2018).

These examples of violent hate crimes have caused strong political reactions in Sweden. For example, in his declaration of government after the general election of 2018, the re-elected Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven condemned antisemitism and announced the government's plan to organise an international conference on the memory of the Holocaust (Löfven 2019)—which eventually was held in October 2021 in the city of Malmö—as well as the foundation of a new state-funded museum with the mission to preserve and disseminate the memory of the Holocaust (Utredningen om ett museum om Förintelsen 2020). In an interview with a journalist in 2019, the former Prime Minister also condemned antisemitism as "un-Swedish" and emphasised the political need to fight it (Orrenius Oct. 30, 2019), reflecting what seems to be a unanimous understanding across political parties and many civil society actors in Sweden of the serious character of antisemitism, the need to condemn it and to take political action against it.

This dissertation starts with these same concerns, but moves the gaze from the sporadic or extreme forms of racism against Jews to instead explore it as a structural phenomenon in Swedish society. As Swedish historian of ideas Henrik Bachner has argued, the strong associations after World War II between antisemitism and the Holocaust have led to antisemitism generally being regarded as an "extreme and abnormal" phenomenon, isolated to extremist political groups. As a consequence of this, antisemitism has been seen as only a marginal phenomenon in Western Europe, and forms of antisemitism that are not related to (neo-)Nazism but exist in broader parts of the population have often been overlooked (Bachner 1999, 14-15). Concerning more common forms of antisemitism, historians studying the first half of the twentieth century have shown the existence in Sweden of what has been labelled as "an antisemitic background bustle" (Kvist Geverts 2008), an "antisemitic undergrowth" (Valentin [1964] 2004, 140), a "hegemonic antisemitic discourse" (Carlsson 2004, 38), and that antisemitism used to be "hegemonic in civil society" (Andersson 2000, 14), thereby conveying the notion of antisemitism as a structural phenomenon in Swedish society prior to the Holocaust. Although Bachner rightly points out that the defeat of Nazi Germany and the exposure of the horrors of the Holocaust have caused overt forms of antisemitism to become illegitimate in Swedish society (Bachner 1999, 17), these various conceptualisations of antisemitism as a structural social phenomenon in Swedish history constitute a source of inspiration to explore contemporary forms of racism against Jews in Swedish society.

Inspired by research on antisemitism as a structural phenomenon, and bearing in mind Bachner's argument that contemporary forms of antisemitism that are not considered extreme or marginal have often been overlooked, I

locate the dissertation in the tradition of Critical Race Studies and approach antisemitism—or what I, inspired by others (Yuval-Davis and Hakim 2015; Achinger and Fine 2017), prefer to call anti-Jewish racism—as a structural phenomenon existing in relation to other forms of racism in contemporary Swedish society. In this study I therefore move the gaze from sporadic or extreme expressions of anti-Jewish racism, on what in hegemonic discourses are considered the "margins" of Swedish society, to instead explore how anti-Jewish racism is part of the "normal" functioning of Swedish society. In other words, while it is easy to associate anti-Jewish racism with the Holocaust (the past), neo-Nazi movements (political extremism) or the situation in Israel-Palestine (elsewhere), I wish to explore racism against Jews as an integral part of Swedish society, and try to understand how anti-Jewish racism is expressed as part of everyday life in contemporary Sweden.

## Purpose and research questions

The analytical focus on anti-Jewish racism as something that happens within the frames of what is considered "normal", beyond the spectacular, is inspired by my theoretical engagement with the tradition of critical race studies, a field that has developed various understandings of racism as a structural social phenomenon permeating modern society (e.g. Miles 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Goldberg 2009b) but only rarely has studied contemporary anti-Jewish racism. While the academic study of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism for the most part has been conducted along other theoretical traditions, separating anti-Jewish racism from other forms of racism, this dissertation engages with anti-Jewish racism as one among many racisms that characterise contemporary Swedish society. By doing so, I explore the specificities of anti-Jewish racism in a context of multiple racisms, and at the time of a political conjuncture in Europe that has been identified by some scholars as characterised by increased levels of ethnonationalism and authoritarian worldviews (Norocel, Hellström, and Jørgensen 2020).

The aim of the dissertation is to explore contemporary anti-Jewish racism both in relation to the majoritarian population in Sweden and also in relation to other experiences of "othering" at the core of what I will refer to as the Swedish racial regime. By doing this, the dissertation aims at expanding the field of critical race studies in Sweden to incorporate an analysis of anti-Jewish racism as social phenomenon. In addition, the thesis aims to develop a critical analysis of the Swedish racial regime, through a specific focus on anti-Jewish

racism, at the crossroads of experiences of anti-Jewish racism and racialised discursive constructions of Jewishness in Sweden.

Pivotal to the dissertation is also the ambition to move away from a focus on contemporary anti-Jewish racism as primarily a Muslim/Arab/Middle Eastern phenomenon, a notion that is widespread in both academia and the public debate in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, such a focus mirrors a conceptualisation of contemporary anti-Jewish racism as "Israel-derived", and evades an understanding of racism as a relational phenomenon. While I don't deny the existence of anti-Jewish racism—or any other form of racism, for that matter—in whatever category of people, the emphasis on contemporary anti-Jewish racism as a Muslim phenomenon connected to the situation in Israel-Palestine has meant that anti-Jewish racism in relation to constructions of "Swedishness" is largely left unexplored, leaving us with the hegemonic narrative that after World War II anti-Jewish racism has somehow disappeared from mainstream Swedish (and Western European) society, surviving only on its "margins". This is a view I wish to counter. Therefore I suggest a shift in perspective concerning the conceptualisation of contemporary anti-Jewish racism, through an analytical gaze that explores it as an inherent part of contemporary Swedish society and existing in relation to other forms of racism. Such a shift in perspective challenges hegemonic notions of antisemitism, but also makes possible a broadened understanding of what anti-Jewish racism is, how it is currently lived and expressed in Sweden, and how it is part of a larger racial and social reality. By doing so, it also expands our knowledge of the Swedish racial regime.

With the above in mind, I have compiled the following research questions to guide the dissertation project:

- How is the category of Jews located discursively in Swedish public debates and cultural products in relation to processes of national boundary-making?
- How do self-identified Jews in Sweden experience and understand exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination, and how do these experiences and understandings relate to continuities and changes within the Swedish racial regime?
- What are central aspects and expressions of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden today?

- What do expressions of contemporary anti-Jewish racism tell us about the nature of the Swedish racial regime?

Thus, the dissertation focuses on anti-Jewish racism in relation to processes of Swedish national boundary-making, shaped through processes of classification based on racialisation. The thesis also understands racism as a social structure at the core of modernity and as a social relation, in which anti-Jewish racism cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of racism in Sweden. In this way, the dissertation contributes to a deepened understanding of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, its relation to notions of "Swedishness", and as a part of larger racial structures permeating late modernity.

For this endeavour, I have collected various forms of empirical material. The bulk of the material consists of 21 in-depth interviews with people in Sweden who identify as Jews, about Jewish identity, and experiences and understandings of anti-Jewish racism/antisemitism. Through this material, it is possible to explore how contemporary anti-Jewish racism is lived at the subjective level. In addition to the interview material, I have conducted participatory observations from various events and meeting-places where anti-Jewish racism was a central theme. I have also analysed how the category of Jews is racialised in public debates on antisemitism, and in a political party's debate on non-medical male circumcision, to see how "Sweden" in hegemonic discourses is portrayed in relation both to Jews as a category as well as to other racial "Others". I have also analysed Ingmar Bergman's film *Fanny and Alexander*, in order to explore how the categories of "Jewishness" and "Swedishness" can be represented at the level of cultural artefacts, reflecting on what this can add to the larger image of the Swedish racial regime appearing throughout the dissertation. The combination of these different kinds of material makes possible an analysis of the Swedish racial regime through a focus on anti-Jewish racism at the crossroads of experiences and racialising discourses.

Written within the field of gender studies, the dissertation engages critically with notions of nationhood, politics of national belonging, and racism, issues which are central to gender studies and feminist theory today. While Sweden in hegemonic discourses is often understood to embody "gender equality" (Martinsson, Griffin, and Giritli Nygren 2016) and "LGBTQ-friendliness" (Kehl 2020), gender studies scholars use a gendered, and often also intersectional lens, to explore how categories of people are excluded from notions of "Swedishness", while ideas about the nation are paired with alleged

progressiveness and inclusivity. The dissertation draws on—and contributes to—these debates by expanding the exploration of how categories are located, sometimes in a seemingly paradoxical manner, in relation to hegemonic notions of "Swedishness" and "Swedish exceptionalism" (Schierup and Ålund 2011). The dissertation also engages with gender studies and feminist theory through the categories of religion and secularism. The importance of these categories for gender studies in Sweden has grown in recent years, reflecting the need to reconsider dualistic conceptualisations of religion as patriarchal and backward, and of secularism as progressive and feminist (see e.g. Alm et al. 2021). In relation to this, the study explores the dynamic relation between the categories of secularism and Protestantism, and what this means for contemporary forms of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. By doing so, the dissertation contributes to feminist scholarship, challenging a dichotomous view of the categories of religion, secularism and secular-feminist notions of religion as oppressive per se. Finally, the study engages with central debates about gender and forms of identity, which are important not only for the discipline of gender studies but also for the ongoing public debate in Sweden and elsewhere.

In addition to gender studies, the dissertation is inspired by and engages with the fields of critical race studies and antisemitism studies in Sweden. Informed by understandings of racism as a relational social phenomenon and as a structure that is constitutive of modernity, the dissertation makes a contribution to critical race studies by demonstrating the relevance and importance of analysing anti-Jewish racism to gain a deepened understanding of the Swedish racial regime. Thereby, the study points toward the necessity of incorporating analyses of anti-Jewish racism into analyses of the asymmetrical power relations that characterise Swedish society, and it displays the fruitfulness of this approach for broadening the critical gaze of the Swedish racial regime.

The dissertation engages with the field of antisemitism studies, building on earlier empirical findings within the field concerning the relation between "Swedishness" and "Jewishness", and analyses of anti-Jewish racism as a structural phenomenon. The study applies a perspective on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism as a relational phenomenon that is part of a larger racial and social reality. In this way, it expands the gaze of the field and contributes to a more dynamic understanding of how contemporary anti-Jewish racism is expressed within the Swedish racial regime. Located within the tradition of critical race studies, but also addressing the field of antisemitism studies, the dissertation is a contribution to an incipient dialogue between the two fields, arguing that a strengthening of this dialogue could deepen knowledge on anti-

Jewish racism specifically, as well as broaden knowledge about aspects of the dynamics of the Swedish racial regime.

Lastly, I hope the thesis will find an audience among people outside academia who identify with a broad project of antiracism and social justice. If people in this group can find any usefulness in the arguments and analysis presented in these pages, the purpose of the dissertation will have been fulfilled.

## A few notes on the history of regulation of Jewish life in Sweden

While the dissertation focuses on anti-Jewish racism and the structures of the Swedish racial regime, and not on the internal life of the Jewish community, nor applies a historical analytical perspective on anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, a backdrop in terms of forms of state regulation and boundary-drawing that over time have shaped the conditions for Jewish life in Sweden is necessary for the analysis that will be conducted throughout this dissertation. Such a brief synthesis is by necessity non-comprehensive, but nonetheless outlines a few basic points of reference which will be helpful for the discussions in the empirical chapters. I have largely built this summary on *History of Jews in Sweden* (*Judarnas historia i Sverige*) (Carlsson 2021), as well as *Judaism in Sweden – a sociological comment* (*Judendom i Sverige – en sociologisk belysning*) (Dencik 2007).

Beginning with the present, there are no official statistics of ethnic or racial belonging in Sweden, but the Jewish Central Council in Sweden estimates there currently to be around 20,000 people in Sweden who are identified as Jewish. Among these, around 6,000 are registered members of local Jewish congregations in Sweden. The largest Jewish congregation is that of Stockholm, with around 4,200 members, but there are also congregations in Gothenburg, Malmö and in north-western Scania. In addition to that, there are smaller Jewish associations in the towns of Uppsala, Västerås, Norrköping, Lund and Borås.[1] Until 2018 there was also a Jewish association in Umeå (Sedehi June 5, 2018). Following legislative changes in the year 2000, and adapting to recommendations issued by the Council of Europe concerning the protection of the rights of minority groups, Jews have been granted the status of a national minority in Sweden, alongside the Roma, the Sámi, the Sweden

1 https://www.judiskacentralradet.se/about-us

Finns and the Tornedalians. Among other things, the legislative changes have led to Yiddish gaining official status as a national minority language, as have the languages of the other national minorities. The recognition of national minorities means that the Swedish state has special obligations to protect them from discrimination, to practise affirmative action towards them, and to grant equality between the national minorities and the majority population.[2]

In relation to Jewish life as far as discussions about religion and secularism are concerned, it should be mentioned that full religious freedom was granted in Sweden in 1952. Prior to this, a Swedish citizen had to be a member of a religious community recognised by the state, such as the Church of Sweden or a Jewish congregation. The legal change made it possible not to be a member of any religious community at all (Dencik 2007, 19). The Church of Sweden, however, continued to be state-owned until the year 2000, when it became independent from the state. Still, important ties remain between the Church of Sweden and the state. For example, according to the Swedish constitution, the Swedish royal family must be of Lutheran faith.[3] It is also worth mentioning that Sweden is one of the few European countries that currently has a ban on the production of kosher meat, which means that such meat must be imported from abroad. This legislation was adopted in Sweden in 1937, and according to Lars Dencik (p. 22), it was inspired by similar laws that had been enacted in Nazi Germany. The current legislation has caused some debate in Sweden (see e.g. Cederberg July 27, 2010), and a member of parliament on behalf of the ethnonationalist party the Sweden Democrats has even urged for Sweden to put a stop to imported kosher and halal meat.[4] It should also be noted that the past couple of decades have seen public debates on male circumcision, with some voices arguing for a ban on non-medical circumcision on boys, although no such bill has been passed (Carlsson 2021, 334-336).

Going back in history, Jews had no legal right to reside in Sweden without converting to Protestantism until 1775, which is late by comparison with Europe. Prior to this, Jews who migrated to Sweden had to be baptised, according to an ecclesiastic law from 1685, although it was possible for Jews to temporarily visit Sweden without converting to Christianity. The Judereglementet, adopted in 1782, was a legislative document regulating the professions Jews could practise, as well as the locations in the country where they were allowed to live and establish Jewish congregations—which were at first restricted to the towns of

2 https://www.minoritet.se/minoritetspolitik

3 See §4 in the Act of Succession: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/successionsordning-18100926_sfs-1810-0926

4 https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/_H902985

Stockholm, Gothenburg and Norrköping. Carl Henrik Carlsson notes that the legislation had a pronounced economic and commercial design, mirroring the notion that the migration of Jews to Sweden ought to benefit the country economically (Carlsson 2021, 36-40). The regulation also stipulated that Jews were not allowed to marry non-Jews. Most of the Jews migrating to Sweden at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century came from Germany, and Ashkenazim have always been the dominating group within the Jewish community in Sweden.

Although the Judereglementet was abolished in 1832 as part of a larger European process of Jewish emancipation, forms of legal discrimination against Jews persisted in Sweden and were only gradually abolished. For example, in 1854 Swedish Jews were granted the right to live in any Swedish towns, and in 1863 it was permitted for Jews to marry non-Jews. In 1870, Jews were granted the right to apply for employment within branches of the government—a privilege that had formerly been reserved for Lutherans. Due to this legislative change, the year 1870 constitutes a key landmark in the history of Jewish emancipation in Sweden (Carlsson 2021, 86-90).

The turn of the century around the year 1900 saw a significant migration of Jews to Sweden from Eastern Europe and the Czarist Russian Empire, some of whom were fleeing pogroms and antisemitic persecution. This led to a substantial growth of the Jewish community in Sweden. Carlsson explains this migration as part of the larger European migration westwards, mostly to the United States, that occurred during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Carlsson 2021, 148-149). Dencik notes that the migration led to changes within the Jewish community in Sweden, due to the social and cultural differences between the newly arrived and the established Swedish-Jewish families. According to Dencik, the migrants from Eastern Europe tended to occupy lower-class positions, were Yiddish-speaking, and some of them embraced what were then novel political ideologies such as socialism and Zionism, in contrast to the established Swedish-Jewish families, who to a higher degree were of the middle or upper-middle class and had invested in forms of adaptation to Swedish Protestant norms (Dencik 2007, 21).[5]

Sweden's relation to Jewish refugees before and during World War II was complex, as shown in a doctoral dissertation by Karin Kvist Geverts (2008). While Sweden often prides itself on its reception of Jewish refugees from the

5 See also Hermele (B. Hermele 2018) for a non-academic contribution regarding the strong pressure for Jewish migrants to assimilate to Swedish Protestant norms at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Nazi death camps at the end of the War—not least through the rescue missions by Raoul Wallenberg and Folke Bernadotte—as well as the reception of Danish and Norwegian Jews during the last years of the War, Kvist Geverts shows how Sweden's refugee policy prior to that was hostile against Jews, and that Swedish authorities partially adapted the Nazi Nuremberg definition of Jews as a racial category for their own bureaucratic categorisation. Another example of Sweden's hostility against Jewish refugees is the Swedish government's urging, alongside that of Switzerland's, for the German Nazi government to mark all Jewish citizens' passports with a "J", in order to prevent German Jews from fleeing to Sweden. In practice there was also a structural discrimination toward Jewish applications for residence in and visas to Sweden (Carlsson 2021, 230). Tragically emblematic of this was the protest among students of medicine at the universities of Uppsala and Lund against the government's proposal to grant residence and work permits to ten Jewish physicians from Germany. The students rejected the proposal with the argument that "a foreign element" in Sweden would be damaging for the nation, a rejection which led the Swedish authorities to deny the physicians' entry into the country (Oredsson 1996).

While it sometimes has been contended, not least by the Swedish government in the aftermath of the Holocaust, that the Jewish community in Sweden was reluctant to accept Jewish refugees due to an alleged fear that a migration of Jewish refugees would increase levels of antisemitism, Swedish author Göran Rosenberg has shown this to be inaccurate. On the contrary, he maintains that the Jewish community was very active in trying to help European Jews escape Nazism, and that it was the Swedish government who was reluctant to let Jews enter the country (Rosenberg 2021).

Due to the fact that Sweden was never occupied during the War and that Jewish refugees did arrive in Sweden, mostly toward the end of the War, the 1930s and 1940s saw a considerable growth of the Jewish community in Sweden—from around 7,000 in 1933 to 14,000 in 1945—in sharp contrast to most other parts of Europe. During the 1950s and 1960s, the number of Jewish inhabitants in Sweden continued to increase as a consequence of the arrival of Jewish refugees from Central and Eastern Europe, following the revolts in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), the antisemitic campaign in Poland that started in 1968, and also from the former Soviet Union after its demise. According to Dencik, many of these migrants had a strong Jewish identity but a low degree of religious identification, which influenced the secular aspects of Jewishness to increase in importance in the Jewish community in Sweden (Dencik 2007, 23-24).

Although not related to the regulation of Jewish life, but still relevant for the dissertation, are the ways in which the Swedish state has worked with the memory of the Shoah since the 1990s.[6] At the end of the 1990s, the Swedish Social Democratic government, confronted with statistics showing that knowledge about the Holocaust was meagre among Swedish children and youth, commissioned the publication of a book commemorating the Holocaust, *Om detta må ni berätta* (*Tell ye your children*) (Bruchfeld and Levine 1998), which was distributed in Swedish schools. In 1998, Prime Minister Göran Persson took the initiative to found what was to become the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and in 2000 Sweden hosted an international conference in memory of the Holocaust, in Stockholm (Carlsson 2021, 344). Part of the Swedish government's engagement with the memory of the Holocaust was also the creation in 2003 of the Forum för levande historia (Living History Forum), its mission being to honour democracy, tolerance and human rights, with the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as a point of reference.[7] In 2021, the Swedish government under Prime Minister Stefan Löfven hosted a new international Holocaust memorial conference, this time in Malmö, although it was significantly smaller in scale than the one in 2000, partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.[8]

To sum up this brief overview, it is noteworthy that the Jewish community in Sweden has a shorter history than in many other European countries, due to the longstanding centrality of the Lutheran faith to the Swedish state apparatus, although the community grew both in number and diversity as a result of migration from various countries over time. The Protestant religion continued to be pivotal to the regulation of Jewish life in Sweden for about a century after Jews were granted the right to residence without converting to Christianity. In relation to religion and secularism, it should be underlined that kosher slaughter is still prohibited in Sweden, despite the state's recognition of Jews as a national minority. Also notable is the way in which the state currently works with the memory of the Holocaust in contrast to its restrictive refugee policy after Hitler's rise to power in Germany until the last few years of World War II.

6 I use the terms Holocaust and Shoah interchangeably throughout these pages. For a discussion on terminology, see Gordon (2015).

7 https://www.levandehistoria.se/om-oss/hur-arbetar-vi/historia

8 https://www.government.se/articles/2021/10/the-programme-of-the-malmo-forum/

# Disposition

After this introductory chapter, an overview of previous research on anti-Jewish racism/antisemitism is presented in Chapter 2. There, I discuss the implications of various conceptualisations of antisemitism, and argue for the fruitfulness of deploying a relational approach to contemporary anti-Jewish racism, and to conceptualise it as a modern phenomenon. I discuss previous research on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism in an international tradition of critical theory, as well as within the tradition of antisemitism studies in the Swedish context. This latter comprises both historical inquiries into antisemitism in Sweden, together with studies of contemporary experiences of anti-Jewish racism. At the end of the chapter, I reiterate my intent to contribute to an incipient dialogue between the fields of critical race studies and antisemitism studies.

Next, Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework of the dissertation, in which I develop, in dialogue with various feminist and critical race scholars, my understanding of racism and how it relates to the modern nation-state. I discuss concepts such as "racial regime" and racialisations, the importance of gender for conceptualisations of nationhood and its relation to racism, as well as the specifics of "Swedish exceptionalism" and alleged "Swedish gender equality". Moreover, I discuss notions of European "racelessness" and its implications for understandings of contemporary anti-Jewish racism, but also how ideas of Western universalism, secularism and Protestantism merge with the importance attributed to "sameness" in Scandinavia, and who can be considered as "truly belonging" to the nation, and how this can help us to think theoretically about anti-Jewish racism in Sweden today.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the methodological framework of the dissertation. Here, my point of entry is feminist methodological discussions, which I bring into the discussion of Michael Burawoy's "Extended Case Method", a contribution which largely has informed the methodological underpinnings of the thesis. A critical part of this discussion is the interrelationality between the research participants and myself, and how I understand this to have informed the production of knowledge. Thereafter, I present and discuss the various methods I have used in this research project.

This is followed by a total of six empirical chapters, which can be said to comprise two parts. The first part, Chapters 5-6, explores anti-Jewish racism at a discursive level in Swedish society and in the case of a cultural artefact, whereas the second part, Chapters 7-10, analyses identities, and experiences and understandings, of anti-Jewish racism among the interviewees. In this latter part, I also add descriptions and analyses from the participatory observations I have

conducted. To a certain extent, the first block of empirical chapters constitutes a background for the interview chapters.

Chapter 5 explores media discourses on antisemitism and what this implies for racialisations of Jews, but also for Muslims, and what it means for notions of "Swedishness". Here, I also analyse the debate on a ban on non-medical male circumcision on minors that took place within the Centre Party in 2019, as an example of the complex entanglements between "Swedishness", racial "Others", religion/secularism and gender, in a Swedish context. In Chapter 6, I explore the portrayal of the Jewish characters in Bergman's film *Fanny and Alexander*, their relation to the non-Jewish characters and their function for the overall plot. I explore what this cultural artefact can tell us about anti-Jewish racism within the Swedish racial regime, in relation to categories such as religion, secularism, gender and sexuality.

In Chapter 7, "Anti-Jewish racism as (in)visibility", I discuss anti-Jewish racism in relation to pressures to assimilate to non-Jewish Swedish norms, visible "difference", and what migration from the Global South to Sweden has implied for the degree to which Jews in Sweden can both "pass" as white and challenge exclusionary notions of "Swedishness". In Chapter 8, "Between 'Swedishness' and other 'Others'", I explore how the interviewees navigate between the process of racialisation and of relative racial privilege, and what this implies for the category of Jews in the Swedish racial regime. In Chapter 9, "Making sense of anti-Jewish racism: between Israel and Swedish normality", I explore the importance attributed to the State of Israel, both for the identity of some of the interviewees as well as for their perceptions of contemporary anti-Jewish racism, and how this relates to experiences of everyday racism in Sweden. In Chapter 10, "manoeuvring the Swedish demand for 'sameness'", I discuss anti-Jewish racism in relation to Protestant-secular norms, how the interviewees handle the influence of "sameness" in the Swedish racial regime and how racial differentiation can sometimes be expressed as an exotification of the category of Jews.

Finally, in Chapter 11, I wrap up the empirical findings of the dissertation and discuss how these can help us to deepen our understanding of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime. Here, I turn to the discussion in Chapter 2 on the various conceptualisations of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism and discuss how the empirical findings in the dissertation relate to these. I discuss how the phenomenon of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden can be defined and, on that basis, what possibilities I see for a dialogue between critical race studies and the field of antisemitism. To conclude, I discuss what the empirical findings tell us about the characteristics of the Swedish racial regime, and the possibilities for challenging racism in Sweden.

# Chapter 2: Overview of the field

## Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss previous research on anti-Jewish racism, both more broadly and within the specific understanding of anti-Jewish racism as part of the Swedish racial regime. I begin by pointing out the division between the fields of antisemitism studies and critical race studies, and I map some attempts to bring the fields closer together. Inspired by Swedish scholar of antisemitism Lars Dencik, I show what implications different conceptualisations of antisemitism have for the possibilities and limitations of connecting the two fields. Thereafter, I outline some of the research that has been conducted in relation to antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, internationally and in Sweden. While this overview does not cover all the existing research on the topic, I focus particularly on those parts that seem relevant in order to insert anti-Jewish racism as a social phenomenon within a wider social context, and I pay special attention to empirical findings and perspectives within Swedish research on antisemitism that can create connections with the field of critical race studies, for the endeavour of exploring anti-Jewish racism as part of the Swedish racial regime.

## Racism "and" antisemitism

The academic approach to antisemitism as a social phenomenon is characterised by a paradox. On the one hand, antisemitism has been regarded as the epitome of racism, with Europe's collective memory of the Shoah shaping images of what racism is (Achinger and Fine 2017). On the other hand, some scholars of antisemitism have often found it necessary to separate antisemitism from other forms of racism, emphasising its specificity (Wieviorka 2007). This separation between racism and antisemitism is materialised by the fact that scholars of racism and scholars of antisemitism are active in different fields of research, with what appears to be a relatively

low degree of interaction between them. For example, in the Swedish case, scholars of antisemitism Lars M. Andersson and Karin Kvist Geverts (2017) have argued that antisemitism constitutes a "blind spot" for scholars of racism, meaning that scholars of racism pay little attention to antisemitism, and they discuss various reasons why that may be the case. While I do believe it to be a correct assessment that critical race scholars in Sweden have paid little attention to antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism as a social phenomenon—something that this dissertation addresses—I believe it is equally true that scholars of antisemitism generally have paid little attention to how antisemitism is entangled with other forms of racism. Moreover, within the field of antisemitism studies, there is sometimes a reluctance to categorise antisemitism as a racism at all, fearing that such a view would render the specific features of antisemitism invisible (Pistone et al. 2021). Such a stance seems to broaden the gap between the fields of antisemitism studies and critical race studies even further, since a logical consequence of this argument would be that antisemitism is not a relevant object of study for scholars of racism.

However, there have also been attempts to bridge the fields of antisemitism and racism studies. A seminal example of this is the anthology *Antisemitism, Racism and Islamophobia – Distorted Face of Modernity* (Achinger and Fine 2017). Originally published as articles in a special issue of the journal *European Societies*, the chapters in the book try in various ways to connect antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism to other forms of racism and/or to analyse it as part of a wider social and racial reality. For example, Glynis Cousin and Robert Fine (2012) discuss the shared history of antisemitism and other forms of racism throughout the formation of modernity, as well as the theoretical and political connections that "classic" scholars of racism, such as W.E.B Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, made between antisemitism and other racisms. Cousin and Fine argue that "a more integral approach" is required for the study of racism as part of modernity. Another example is Véronique Altglas (2012), who discusses contemporary antisemitism in France through a historical lens, connecting it to French colonial history, the emancipation of the French Jewish population under Republican rule, and the alleged current crisis of the French Republic expressed as a "communitarianism" of French social life. In the Spanish case, Alejandro Baer and Paula López (2012) have shown how antisemitism must be understood against the historical background of the Spanish *Reconquista* and the loss of Spanish colonial dominions, but they also remark how racist stereotypes of Jews are mirrored by racist stereotypes of Muslims: while Muslims are depicted as "medieval" and "religious", Jews are seen as "ultramodern" and "rational" etc.

Other attempts to bring studies of antisemitism and racism closer together that could be mentioned comprise analyses of a renewed antisemitism in the United States under the Trump administration, and the implications this has for the boundaries of whiteness in a US racial context where Jews earlier in history had become "white" (Levi and Rothberg 2020; Brodkin 2016). For example, Dean Franco argues that attention should be paid to Jewishness as a discursive formation in the United States, functioning as a trope of regulation of whiteness, notably through the phrase "the new Jews". Franco suggests that, in the Trump era, Jewishness as a discursive formation therefore sheds light on the complexities and workings of whiteness in the US racial context (Franco 2020).

Moreover, to capture contemporary dynamics between anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim racisms, critical race scholar Alana Lentin argues that Jews in Europe have been "hyper-humanised" since the end of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, in contrast to other racialised, minoritised groups (Lentin 2020, 132). Drawing on French antiracist and decolonial activist Houria Bouteldja (Bouteldja Mar. 11, 2015), Alana describes this situation as one of "state philosemitism", but one which forces Jews to uphold hegemonic anti-Muslim narratives in order to be perceived as "good Jews" in the eyes of the state (Lentin 2020, 164).

Other scholars, by contrast, have attempted to bring the two fields together by pointing out similarities between anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim racism, notably by analysing similarities between contemporary conspiracy theories about Jewish world power and anti-Muslim conspiracy theories of a Muslim takeover of Europe ("Eurabia") (Zia-Ebrahimi 2018; Meer 2013).

This dissertation has been inspired by attempts like these to bring the fields of antisemitism and critical race studies into a dialogue with each other. In this regard, I am particularly motivated by the assertion made by David Theo Goldberg concerning the importance of approaching racism as a *relational* phenomenon (Goldberg 2009a). According to Goldberg, a comparativist approach implies that attention is paid primarily to how racist practices and ideas in one space-time are contrasted by practices and ideas elsewhere. Such an approach, however, does not connect these different racist practices and ideas to each other, and it does not explore the relation between them and how they might be constitutive of one another. Or as Goldberg puts it, "[a] comparativist account contrasts and compares. A relational account connects" (p. 1276). Instead of deploying a comparativist approach to different forms of racism, in which similarities and contrasts between them are highlighted, Goldberg argues for the necessity to analyse racisms as connected to one another, suggesting that these connections should be explored. Such an approach implies neither to compare forms of racist suffering, nor to deploy a

universalising lens through which all forms of racism would be reduced to being essentially the same, but rather to explore the relations between various forms of racism and analyse them as part of a larger social reality.

While Goldberg in his article mainly argues for the value of a relational over a comparativist approach as far as the study of racism *across nation-states* is concerned—he explicitly mentions the cases of apartheid South Africa and Israel—I find Goldberg's conceptualisation of a relational approach to racism to be useful to connect different forms of racism also *in the same nation-state*: in our case, Sweden. In contrast to conceptualisations of anti-Jewish racism as inherently different from other forms of racism, which leave us with a comparativist approach that can only contrast and compare anti-Jewish racism with other forms of racism, I make use of Goldberg's concept of racism as a relational phenomenon to connect anti-Jewish racism to other expressions of racism in Sweden. I suggest that such a relational approach to the study of anti-Jewish racism has the possibility of expanding and deepening understandings of the connections between the fields of antisemitism and critical race studies.

In light of this, I am inspired by scholars of racism Nira Yuval-Davis and Jamie Hakim (2015) and Christine Achinger (Achinger and Fine 2017) to use the term "anti-Jewish racism" to describe what in hegemonic discourses is labelled "antisemitism". I do this in order to emphasise a conceptualisation of anti-Jewish racism as one among many different forms of racism characterising modern society. However, since "antisemitism" is a widely used term, I sometimes use it in the dissertation as synonymous with "anti-Jewish racism", often when working through the categories that both mass media and my interviewees employ. For example, I used "antisemitism" in all communication with my interviewees, since it is the term that most people use to denote what I understand to be racism against Jews. Key for the reader to know, therefore, is that, regardless of which term I use at certain places in the text, I regard antisemitism and anti-Jewish racism to be synonymous concepts.

## Conceptualisations of antisemitism

Swedish social anthropologist and scholar of antisemitism Lars Dencik (2020) has argued that contemporary antisemitism could be understood as tripartite: appearing as "classic antisemitism", "Israel-derived antisemitism" and "Enlightenment antisemitism", respectively. According to Dencik, these three forms constitute three separate ways in which antisemitism is currently being expressed in Swedish (and European) society. He also argues that these

expressions have different "underlying philosophies", are manifested in different ways and are propelled by different social groups. From my reading of previous research on antisemitism, it appears that most studies of antisemitism deal primarily with those forms of antisemitism that Dencik classifies as "classic" and "Israel-derived", while the focus on "Enlightenment antisemitism", rooted in a secular and liberal worldview that understands religion as located in a conservative (and often patriarchal) past, has played a minor role in scholarship on antisemitism. While Dencik does not elaborate theoretically upon how these three forms of antisemitism are related to each other, his approach constitutes a novel and, in my view, important contribution to the understanding of contemporary expressions of anti-Jewish racism. Therefore it can function as a useful point of departure for a wider discussion not only about the forms of antisemitism that Dencik identifies, but also about the relation between academic analyses of antisemitism and studies of racism.

From my perspective, what Dencik defines as three different kinds of contemporary antisemitism rather reflect three different ways of conceptualising antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism. That is to say, while Dencik argues that these three distinct forms of antisemitism exist objectively—if I understand him correctly—I make use of Dencik's analysis to instead regard these forms as representations of different theoretical approaches to anti-Jewish racism as a social phenomenon. These different conceptualisations are in turn constituted by different (sometimes overlapping) epistemic premises, which in turn influence both scholarship and public discourses of antisemitism.

First, we have what Dencik classifies as "classic antisemitism", which he understands to be expressed as stereotypes of Jewish wealth and world power. Dencik sees antisemitism among neo-Nazi groups, but also among the parliamentary ethnonationalist right, in Sweden represented by the Sweden Democrats, as typical expressions of this type of antisemitism. The notion of "classic antisemitism" reflects a conceptualisation of antisemitism that regards it primarily as an expression of latent tendencies in society to harbour hostile sentiments against Jews, often taking the form of antisemitic conspiracy theories. Notions both among scholars and non-academics that antisemitism is "the longest hatred" (Wistrich 1992), "the eternal hatred" (Ahlmark 1993) or a "persisting question" (Fein 1987b) that has permeated (Western) society for millennia, and that it exists "everywhere"—maintaining that there can be antisemitism in a given country without any Jewish population (Lendvai 1971; Yegar 2006)—can therefore be seen as expressing a certain conceptualisation of antisemitism. From my perspective, these notions reflect a conceptualisation of antisemitism as "classic" in the sense that they emphasise the *longue durée* (Braudel and Dantier 2005) of the history of antisemitism and also highlight

the centrality of antisemitic conspiracy theories for antisemitism as a social phenomenon.

This conceptualisation of antisemitism has had the advantage of enabling historians and historians of ideas to focus on both the continuities and ruptures of antisemitism throughout history, in Europe and beyond. Some have traced the long history of antisemitism back to biblical times, notably as reflected in the book of Esther, as well as to the era of the late Roman Republic (Laqueur 2009). Fundamentally, many historians have given prominence to the relationship between antisemitism and the history of Christianity. For example, scholars have shown that antisemitic notions are present in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel of John, and that they thrived in Europe throughout the history of the Christian Church in the form of a theological antisemitism, in which Jews were portrayed as *deicides*, murderers of the Christian God (Nicholls 1995). Historians have also observed that from the High Middle Ages and onwards this ecclesiastical antisemitism seems to have taken a more political shape. The incipient European state-building processes demanded that their subjects be devoted Christians, which led to the expulsion of Jews from Belgium in 1261, England in 1290 and France in 1306 and 1394. This process continued with the inauguration of the Early Modern period through the *Reconquista* and the subsequent expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula (in 1492 and 1507), as well as the establishment of the Jewish ghetto in Venice in 1516, the first of its kind. During the same period, the theological teachings of Martin Luther, as expressed in his pamphlet "The Jews and Their Lies" from 1543, had a strong anti-Jewish character, exacerbating medieval antisemitism, calling for Jews to be killed if they did not convert to Christianity (Lindemann and Levy 2010; Marcus 2015).

In addition to the focus on the long history of antisemitism, the conceptualisation of antisemitism as "classic" is also mirrored in widespread metaphors of antisemitism as a (latent) seemingly never-ending "virus" in society (see e.g. Wiman and Sjöswärd 2021as a recent non-acedemic example of this in the Swedish context). In the UK, however, some scholars have criticised the notion of antisemitism as a "virus" or a "poison", arguing that antisemitism should not be understood as a contagion that people happen to catch. Instead, they propose that antisemitism should better be understood as a "reservoir" of stereotypes and narratives that people easily can draw on (Gidley, McGeever, and Feldman 2020). However, as pointed out by sociologist David Seymour (forthcoming), both the understanding of antisemitism as a "virus" as well as a "reservoir" imply a conceptualisation of antisemitism as essentially existing outside society proper. Instead, Seymour suggests that antisemitism be conceptualised as an ideology that is part of the social world.

In light of the conceptualisation of antisemitism as "classic", we can perhaps also understand sociologist Helen Fein's (Fein 1987a) definition of antisemitism, which often has been referred to within antisemitism scholarship. Fein defines antisemitism along the following lines:

> I propose to define antisemitism as a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs toward Jews as a collectivity manifested in individuals as attitudes, and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore, and imagery, and in actions – social or legal discrimination, political mobilisation against Jews, and collective or state violence – which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews. (p. 67)

Fein's definition is indeed wider than conceptualisations of antisemitism as "classic", because it also involves both "hostile beliefs" and "actions" such as legal discrimination and state violence. At the same time, the emphasis on antisemitism as something that is expressed through "myth, ideology, folklore, and imagery" is similar to Dencik's understandings of "classic antisemitism" and its emphasis on notions of Jewish wealth, world power and conspiracy theories. From my perspective, what is lacking in Fein's widespread definition is a relational approach that makes it possible to connect antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism with other forms of racism, which would make it possible also to explore those forms of antisemitism that can neither be captured as "hostile beliefs" nor as violent "actions", but nevertheless imply a social inferiorisation of the category of Jews. Such an analytical openness, however, seems difficult to attain if it is deemed central to clearly define antisemitism, since definitions are made exactly with the purpose of contrasting phenomena or ideas from each other.

A shortcoming with the "classic" conceptualisation of antisemitism is the risk that the understanding of antisemitism as allegedly semi-eternal and omnipresent makes it hard to analyse antisemitism as a relational and contextual phenomenon, since this view implies an emphasis on the supposed uniqueness of antisemitism in a way that makes it difficult to connect its specificities to other social structures. In addition to that, it makes it hard to see how antisemitism actually could be fought.

Another type of antisemitism is what Dencik defines as "Israel-derived". From Dencik's perspective, this encompasses forms of antisemitism that are directly related to the situation in Israel-Palestine. From my perspective, it rather mirrors a specific conceptualisation accenting contemporary antisemitism as being articulated through critique of the State of Israel and/or Israeli society (see e.g. Cousin and Fine 2012). For example, the paradigm of so-called "new antisemitism", which I will come back to further on, relies on

this conceptualisation of antisemitism. This "new antisemitism" is the notion, widespread both in academia and in public debates, that contemporary antisemitism today is primarily expressed as hatred against the State of Israel and the Zionist political project. Moreover, this implies framing both the category of Muslims/Middle Easterners, as well as the anti-imperialist left expressing its solidarity with the Palestinian cause, as the main proponents of contemporary antisemitism (Taguieff 2004; Iganski and Kosmin 2003; Wistrich 2002).

Beyond academia but within the political field, there is a "working definition" of antisemitism that has been suggested by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA),[9] which has been adopted by several states including Sweden.[10] Some scholars and public intellectuals have reacted against this definition, arguing that it focuses too extensively on Israel-derived antisemitism and that it is too quick to categorise certain forms of critique against the State of Israel as antisemitism. Therefore they have suggested an alternative definition of antisemitism, called the "Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism" (JDA), defying the IHRA Declaration.[11] Regardless of the specific contents of both Declarations, which fall outside the scope of this dissertation, this public and political debate shows the weight of the conceptualisation of antisemitism as "Israel-derived".

It should be noted that from my perspective the "classic" and Israel-derived conceptualisations of antisemitism are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. It is possible, and in my view quite common, to have an understanding of antisemitism as related primarily to both conspiracy theories and to the situation in Israel-Palestine, and indeed that conspiracy theories can be expressed in relation to the State of Israel. As I see it, the problem with these two complementary conceptualisations of antisemitism is that they contribute to the notion that antisemitism would be something separate from other forms of racism, instead of perceiving it as related to them. This emphasis on the uniqueness of antisemitism—which is not the same as exploring its historic and social specificities—tends to isolate antisemitism from an analysis of its relation to other forms of racism and social structures.

The last form of antisemitism is what Lars Dencik categorises as *Aufklärungsantisemitismus* (Enlightenment antisemitism). According to Dencik, this form of antisemitism is based on liberal ideals of individual

9 https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

10 https://www.government.se/opinion-pieces/2020/01/opinion-piece/

11 https://jerusalemdeclaration.org

freedom and secularism and can be expressed as attempts to prohibit Jewish religious practices such as male circumcision or the ritual slaughter of animals. I believe the conceptualisation of antisemitism that is implied in this perspective opens up for a different way of thinking about antisemitism in a radically different way than the "classic" and "Israel-derived" conceptualisations of it. A conceptualisation of antisemitism as related to and constructed through the binary opposition between religion and secularism (Asad et al. 2013) at the core of the Enlightenment—and in a larger sense to the modern project in its entirety—creates bridges towards thinking about antisemitism as an anti-Jewish racism that exists in relation to other racisms. Unlike a focus on antisemitism as expressed through conspiracy theories or in relation to the situation in Israel-Palestine, which make a relational approach difficult since they generally emphasise how anti-Jewish racism is inherently different from other forms of racism, scholarship which in one way or another takes European modernity into account opens up for a more dynamic and relational approach to antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism. This includes an analytical gaze that centres categories such as the Enlightenment, the modern state, capitalist expansion, constructions of nationhood, whiteness, modern constructions of gender and sexuality, and so on for an analysis of contemporary antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism. The explicit examples of bridging the fields of antisemitism studies and critical race studies that were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter can be seen as being informed by such a perspective. Since many scholars in the tradition of critical race studies take the modern/colonial project into account when they study various forms of racism (which we will see in Chapter 3), a conceptualisation of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism as constitutive of modernity thereby creates a significant rapprochement between the fields of antisemitism studies and critical race studies.

There are some noteworthy examples of contributions to the field of antisemitism studies that I would like to mention because they can be read as informed by a conceptualisation of antisemitism that is entangled with the Enlightenment and/or modernity. In relation to the historical shift from medieval theological antisemitism to modern racial-biological antisemitism, historian Arthur Hertzberg (1990) has explored the role of the Enlightenment in the propagation and transformation of European antisemitism. Focusing on Voltaire as an embodiment of Enlightenment philosophy, Hertzberg demonstrates how Voltaire's well-documented antisemitism must be understood as a product of the philosopher's investment in a European identity. In his anticlerical endeavour, Voltaire made a clear division between the Old and New Testaments, holding that the New Testament was not only an

expression of biblical faith inherited from a Jewish tradition, but also contained a valuable legacy of Greek philosophy. By this separation at the level of ideas and worldview, Voltaire could argue that there was a direct linkage between Ancient Greece and the Christian Europe of his own time, while simultaneously reducing what he considered to be religious and biblical superstition to a question of Jewishness, not proper to Europe itself. While Hertzberg also shows that other Enlightenment philosophers, notably Montesquieu, had other understandings of cultural differences, he makes an important contribution in demonstrating how Voltaire's cultural antisemitism within an Enlightenment frame paved the way for a transition from theological antisemitism to racial-biological, with an emphasis on the alleged cultural and philosophical difference between the category of Jews and the category of "European"/"Aryan". This analytical gaze, centred on the Enlightenment project, therefore constitutes a noteworthy example within the field of antisemitism studies of how connections, albeit implicit, can be established with the field of critical race studies. By underlining the relation between antisemitism and Enlightenment philosophy, Herzberg opens up for also thinking of other racisms in relation to the prehistory of biological racism.

Another interesting example of antisemitism scholarship related to the Enlightenment is the book *La République et le cochon* (*The Republic and the Pig*) by French sociologist and scholar of antisemitism Pierre Birnbaum (2013). Birnbaum has noted that there is a particular symbolical connection between pork and the French Republic, since French Republican ideology during the past two hundred years has emphasised the importance of all citizens "sitting around the same table" and eating the "same dishes". That certain groups of people, such as Jews, would abstain from eating pork has therefore been interpreted as something hostile to the French Republic and the unity of the nation. Birnbaum observes that this is something that differentiates Republican ideology in France from that of, for example, the United States, where consumption of different dishes has not been interpreted as something impeding citizens from "eating together" (pp. 49-50, 76-77). In order to ensure national cohesion in France, Jews and Muslims alike have been urged to abandon their cultural taboo of eating pork, according to Birnbaum.

While historians have explored antisemitism in relation to Christian theology, and also to the political changes occurring in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, scholars working in a critical tradition have also explored antisemitism as part of the modern project. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1997), philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer explored the antisemitism of the Nazi regime and its connection to the Enlightenment as part of European modernity and capitalism. Arguing

that antisemitism is a product of "false projection", i.e. that the non-Jew projects their own negative features onto the figure of the Jew, Adorno and Horkheimer demonstrate the contractionary character of antisemitism, in which the figure of the Jew can be portrayed both as a capitalist and as a Bolshevik simultaneously, and that in both these cases the figure of the Jew is made into a scapegoat for the problems of modernity. In his book *Anti-Semite and Jew* (French edition: *Réflexions sur la question juive*), written at the very end of World War II, philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1947) tries to understand antisemitism in relation to the existential conditions of the human being. Famously contending that "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him", and thus arguing that the antisemite needs "the Jew" as a useful function in their own life, Sartre understands antisemitism as a product of society's creation of enemies—"Others"—to legitimise itself. Although Sartre has been heavily criticised for conflating racial classification with ethnic self-identification—as visible in his contention that Jewishness can be reduced to a product of antisemitic hatred (Judaken 2006)—Sartre's book has been valuable for exploring antisemitism in relation to the notion of difference.

Another theorist, whose books on antisemitism and the Holocaust have had a great impact on intellectual debates, is philosopher Hannah Arendt. In *The Origins of totalitarianism* (1973), Arendt conducts a tripartite exploration of the modern state in relation to antisemitism, imperialism and totalitarianism. She argues that historically, from the Middle Ages onward, the nobility and bourgeoisie in both Eastern and Western Europe have fostered popular antisemitism in their own political and economic interests. Not least does she discuss the Dreyfus affair in France around the turn of the nineteenth century, in relation to the political conflicts of the Third Republic, as an example of an instrumentalisation of antisemitism for political purposes. Furthermore, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*, Arendt (2006) analyses the trial against Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1960, exploring the role of bureaucracy and professional rationality for the implementation of the Holocaust, but polemically also discusses the role of the leaders of the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and their relations to the Nazi machinery.

Regarding antisemitism and European modernity, there is sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's (1991) ground-breaking contribution *Modernity and the Holocaust*. In this book, Bauman argues that the Nazi genocide can be understood as a product of modernity, and that it wouldn't have been possible to carry out without previous processes of industrialisation and bureaucratisation, which were pivotal to the intensity and "efficiency" (within the Nazi logics) of the genocide, killing six million people over a few years. Bauman has been criticised for not giving enough attention to the role of terror

in the implementation of the Holocaust (O'Kane 1997), and also for not acknowledging the continuity between the Holocaust and the German colonial enterprise and the genocide in Namibia, which some scholars have argued was an essential factor leading up to the Nazi genocide (Olusoga and Erichsen 2010). Nevertheless, Bauman's location of the Holocaust in the midst of modern rationality has been key for exploring antisemitism as a feature of European modernity.

I mention these contributions as important examples of the potential within the conceptualisation of antisemitism as "Enlightenment antisemitism"—which in my reading encompasses the modern project at large. Although several of these contributions do not engage in the relation between anti-Jewish racism and other forms of racism, their emphasis on the modern state and nationhood, among other topics, opens up the study of antisemitism for exploring the entanglements between anti-Jewish racism and other forms of racism that are also understood to be related to modernity and the Enlightenment. I therefore suggest that studies that are based on this conceptualisation of antisemitism have a greater potential for establishing a relational approach to antisemitism/racism than those that conceptualise antisemitism as either "classic" or "Israel-derived".

However, I wish to underline that I do not argue that the conceptualisations of antisemitism that are mirrored in Dencik's types of "classic" and "Israel-derived" antisemitism are false or inaccurate. I do indeed believe that antisemitism has a long history, that it can be expressed in conspiracy theories, and that it can be channelled through criticism against the State of Israel. In short, my point is that different conceptualisations of antisemitism make it possible to see different features of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism as a social phenomenon. In that respect, the conceptualisation of antisemitism as Enlightenment-related or constitutive of modernity—a view that is still minoritarian within the field of antisemitism studies—offers an analytical perspective which renders possible an analysis of different features of contemporary antisemitism from the other conceptualisations offered. In addition, this conceptualisation of antisemitism also opens up for an analysis of antisemitism as related to other forms of racism in a way that the other conceptualisations hardly do. Through this *relational* approach, it becomes possible to establish a dialogue between the fields of antisemitism studies and critical race studies. By locating the dissertation in the tradition of critical race studies but looking at a social phenomenon that primarily has been explored within the field of antisemitism studies, I wish to contribute further to this dialogue.

With this in mind, I am interested in studies within scholarship on antisemitism, both internationally and in Sweden, that provide a basis for a dialogue with critical race studies. In the case of antisemitism studies in Swedish, there are academic contributions which do not focus on antisemitism as primarily "classic" or "Israel-related", but rather explore antisemitism in relation to Swedish nationhood, as in one way or another relating to other forms of racism or to whiteness, and that deploy what might be considered an understanding of antisemitism as something that is structural to Swedish society. In this dissertation, I am therefore partly inspired by such contributions from the field of antisemitism studies, and I strive to analyse my empirical material in relation to both those contributions, as well as others from the field of critical race studies, in order to strengthen the connections between both fields. By doing so, I hope it will be possible to scrutinise some characteristics of both the Swedish racial regime and contemporary anti-Jewish racism.

## Critical Race Studies and anti-Jewish racism

While the tradition of Critical Race Studies constitutes a rich and thriving field of research exploring racism in relation to phenomena such as labour exploitation, migration and legal systems, it is, however, noteworthy that little attention has been paid to anti-Jewish racism by scholars working in this field. To the extent this has been done, the contributions have mostly been conducted from a historical perspective, demonstrating anti-Jewish racism as a part of European modernity's racial classification systems. For example, scholars have shown that European antisemitism was intensified during the Late Middle Ages, thereby opening up for establishing the year of 1492 as a symbolical date of departure for a critical analysis of modern anti-Jewish racism (L.R. Gordon, Grosfoguel, and Mielants 2009). That being the year not only of the initiation of the European colonisation of the Americas, but also of the ethnic cleansing in the Iberian Peninsula from Jews and Muslims, such a perspective makes possible a conjunct analysis of how the category was framed as an "Other", alongside the category of the Muslim and people in the colonised world. For example, decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo (2009) has called attention to the fact that the tripartite religious classification in the post-Reconquista Iberian peninsula (Christian/Jew/Muslim) mirrors the racial classification of the colonised Americas (white/indigenous/black), locating the white Christian European at the top of the hierarchy, and the two racialised others in an inferior position. From this perspective of the long history of European racism and

colonialism, anti-Jewish racism can also be understood as fundamental to a continuous process of national homogenisation, which in turn has been central for European state-building processes (Miles 1993; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). The importance attributed to the modern project in these analyses underscores the fruitfulness of a conceptualisation of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism as modernity-related.

However, it is noteworthy that analyses within a critical tradition of the role and function of anti-Jewish racism within European modernity often end with the liberation of the Nazi death camps in 1945, or with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. One exception to this in the United States is sociologist Karen Brodkin (1998), who has shown how Roosevelt's New Deal and the end of World War II implied a "whitening" of American Jews, but also a reinforcement of the American "colour line" (Du Bois 1990), by analogy with Ignatiev's (1995) analysis of how the American Irish underwent a process of becoming white. Departing from her own family history, including her grandparents' participation in the Jewish (and Yiddish-speaking) socialist movement in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, but also her own childhood memories of being one of the few non-blonde girls in a white suburban neighbourhood in the 1950s and 1960s, she shows how the American Jewish population has gradually, through political decisions and cultural shifts, reached a position of whiteness, shared with other descendants of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (such as Polish Americans and Italian Americans). Historian Eric Goldstein (2006) has also explored the process of Jews becoming white in the US context, arguing that this has implied a loss for American Jewry in terms of cultural identity, through adaptation to Anglo-Saxon cultural standards and norms of living, and that this has led to a greater racial hierarchisation between the Jewish and Black American populations than there was prior to the New Deal. However, to what degree the inclusion of Jews into American whiteness remains stable is questioned in a later text by Brodkin (2016), in which she asks herself whether Donald Trump's presidency might lead to a shift in the racial location of Jews in the United States.

In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, critical race scholars have criticised what they regard as an anti-Muslim and colonial agenda of the paradigm of so-called "new antisemitism", a concept that was mentioned earlier in this chapter and which implies that antisemitism is understood as being primarily expressed as hatred against the State of Israel and the Zionist political project, framing both the category of Muslims/Middle Easterners, as well as the anti-imperialist left expressing its solidarity with the Palestinian cause, as the main proponents of contemporary antisemitism (Taguieff 2004;

Iganski and Kosmin 2003; Wistrich 2002). In this regard, Matthias Gardell (2010) argues that the framing of Muslims as particularly prone to anti-Jewish racism is part of a long Western tradition of regarding the Muslim Other as less civilised, harking back to the Spanish *Reconquista* and traces from the Holy Crusades. Other scholars have argued that both anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish racisms are part of a long tradition of European racism, and must be analysed as such, but that it is analytically unproductive to conflate antisemitism with opposition to the Zionist political project, since they argue this opposition is a legitimate anti-colonial political position (Bunzl 2007; Peace 2009; Yuval-Davis 2019). Moreover, political philosopher Judith Butler has argued that political Zionism, which she understands as just one of many possible Zionisms in a broad Jewish tradition, is an inherently violent project, due to its constant need to ensure that there is a Jewish demographic majority in the territory defined as the State of Israel, requiring a continuous ethnic cleansing of its non-Jewish population (Butler 2014).

Adding a non-Eurocentric perspective to the situation in Israel-Palestine, Gil Hochberg (2007) uses the concept of "the Levant" to argue that the partition of the former British Mandate of Palestine into the State of Israel and today's occupied Palestine mirrors a Eurocentric division of the categories of Arabs and Jews, a division which according to Hochberg bears little meaning from a non-European perspective. Focusing her analytical gaze on Mizrahi Jews, or so-called "Arab Jews", instead of on the history of the European (mostly Ashkenazi) Jewish population, Hochberg argues that the category of Mizrahi Jews reveals the Zionist project's Eurocentrism, since the Mizrahi Jewish experience does not fit into a strict division between the categories of Arabs and Jews, but encompasses both categories (Hochberg 2007).

From another perspective, but in line with the argument of the impossibility of separating the category of Jews from the category of Arabs, Gil Anidjar (2003) explores both categories as constructed enemies of Europe, essential for the construction of a European identity. Arguing that the category of the Jew historically has been constructed as a theological enemy and the category of the Muslim as a political enemy, Anidjar claims that this separation between theology and politics corresponds to a modern, secular division between religion and culture, and that Europe's contemporary location of Jews and Muslims as each other's enemies is a reflection of the European need to make both these categories as constitutive, yet oppositional, elements of its own identity. In a later book, Anidjar (2008) also argues that the European nineteenth-century invention of the category of the "Semite", encompassing Jews and Arabs alike, is another example of how closely these categories are linked together in European modernity and for racism in Europe. Somewhat

differently, sociologist David Theo Goldberg (2006) argues that the figure of the Jew, alongside that of the Muslim, but also of the Black, is constitutive of a racial European imaginary, from the invention of racial categories until today's discursive climate of European "racelessness", in which race is attributed no official acknowledged importance, yet continues to be fundamental for modern society.

Post-colonial scholar Edward Said (2003) has also addressed the issue of the European character of historical antisemitism, emphasising what he argues are forms of Eurocentrism in the European states' official commemoration of the memory of the Shoah. Instead, he advocates opening up an understanding of the Palestinian *Nakba* and the Shoah as each being an example of genocide in a long European history. Related to this topic but within the tradition of memory studies, Michael Rothberg (2009) has explored the difficulties of cohabiting and working with multiple historical and social traumas, particularly the Holocaust and Black slavery in an American context. Discussing the limitations of Hannah Arendt's Eurocentrism and putting her into dialogue with anti-colonial thinker Aimé Césaire and scholar of racism W.E.B. Du Bois, Rothberg argues for a future of "multidirectional memory", in which the memory of various historical traumas can cohabit without competing against each other.

Feminist and queer scholars have also explored how the categories of gender and sexuality intersect with antisemitism as a social phenomenon in a broad sense. For example, feminist historian Claudia Koonz (1986) has explored the role that women played at various levels in Nazi Germany, ranging from active supporters of the Nazi regime, silent followers, active resisters, to victims in the death camps, pointing at the importance that gender held in both the upholding of Nazism, as well as in the opposition against it. She argues that race and gender were fundamental pillars of the Nazi regime and of the way in which the genocide against Jews was carried out. Instead of seeing women as reduced to mere victims of the misogynist Nazi regime, she explores how some women actively supported the transformation of gender relations in the transition from the Weimer Republic to the Third Reich, thereby pointing out the complex relation between gender and antisemitism. In relation to the aftermath of Nazism, gender scholar Marianna Hirsch (2012) has examined the transference of memory from Holocaust survivors to their children, and how memories of the trauma of genocide continue to live with the "generation after", to a large extent shaping the lives of the children of Holocaust survivors. Inscribing herself in a feminist tradition, she explores the role that gender plays in how histories are remembered and forgotten, and how forms of intimacy and familial bonds shape the conditions of memory in the aftermath of genocide.

In that sense, gender as a category becomes a way for Hirsch to connect the racist past with the present.

Moreover, feminist sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis (2020) has analysed debates on Israel-Palestine in the United Kingdom, and the difficulty of simultaneously addressing the issues of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the project of political Zionism, racism and antisemitism. For example, she discusses how, in the US political debate, some political actors have argued that intersectionality is a "codeword" for antisemitism, due to the expressions of solidarity of many Black feminists with the Palestinian cause. Yuval-Davis strongly rejects this understanding of both intersectionality and antisemitism, and argues that a critique of Zionism should not be conflated with the notion of anti-Jewish racism.

In relation to racism and sexuality, some scholars have explored the role that anti-Jewish racism has had for the construction of heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. For example, in the anthology *Queer theory and the Jewish question* (Boyarin, Itzkowitz, and Pellegrini 2003) various authors explore the entanglements between queerness and modern Jewishness as points of departure for a critique of expressions of sexual, gendered and racial domination in Europe. Historian of religion Daniel Boyarin (1997) has also shown how the invention of heterosexuality in nineteenth-century Europe was built on antisemitic tropes surrounding the allegedly "feminised" Jewish man, who discursively was counterposed to the Aryan man. Simultaneously, he argues that Western gender roles are not universal, and suggests that in the Jewish tradition there have been alternative forms of constructing gender and sexuality. Along similar lines, cultural historian scholar Sander Gilman (1993) has argued for the centrality of the construction of the Jewish "Other" as sexually deviant in Central Europe during the second half on the nineteenth century to understand the gender roles of the bourgeoisie at the time. Also, scholar of masculinity George Mosse (1996) has explored the close relationship between homosexuality and Jewishness for the construction of a modern, Western ideal of masculinity at the beginning of twentieth-century Europe, how both categories were depicted as "unmanly", and how these processes of othering were constitutive of fascism as a political ideology.

One interesting and novel attempt outside academia to enlarge the discussion about antisemitism is the notion, in a German-speaking context, of *Goynormativität* (goy normativity) (Coffey and Laumann 2021). Derived from the Yiddish word *goy*, designating the non-Jew, the notion of goy normativity highlights how non-Jewish traditions and practices constitute a norm in Western society, to which Jews find themselves in a position of inferiority, by analogy with how other minoritised groups have to confront exclusionary

societal norms. With an explicitly intersectional approach, the authors use the concept to argue that goy normativity is entangled with other forms of structural oppression in Western society. Although I disagree with the replacement of the concept of racism by "normativity" and the epistemic underpinnings that hold up such a view, the concept has the advantage of rendering anti-Jewish racism—in the form of goy normativity—visible as an intrinsic part of modern society, and it shows the fruitfulness of an intersectional approach to explore forms of anti-Jewish racism/antisemitism/ goy normativity.

Thus, I suggest that the tradition of critical race studies makes it possible to perceive anti-Jewish racism as one among many forms of modern racism, constitutive of modernity, and entangled in processes such as European colonialism, the construction of the nation-state, gender and sexuality. While scholars within this field also have presented what I regard as an important critique of the paradigm of "new antisemitism", it remains a fact that few of them have explored anti-Jewish racism in the post-Holocaust era and after the establishment of the State of Israel. Partly, this can be understood in light of the fact that, scholars within this field of studies often have explored racism in relation to labour exploitation and migration, sometimes also expressed as racisms "of colour", which allegedly would exclude (Ashkenazi) Jews from this scope of research—although it should be stressed, again, that boundaries of whiteness are subject to historical change (Ignatiev 1995). However, the dissertation takes as its point of entry the understanding of anti-Jewish racism as one among many forms of racism and as deeply entangled with the modern project. Through this relational approach, which becomes possible through a conceptualisation of anti-Jewish racism as related to modernity, the dissertation wishes to contribute both to the field of critical race studies through an exploration of contemporary Swedish anti-Jewish racism, and to a deepened dialogue between this field of research and the field of antisemitism studies.

# Research on antisemitism in Sweden

## History, nationhood and memory

In Sweden historians and historians of ideas have explored Sweden's Jewish history and the history and context of Swedish antisemitism before, during and after the Holocaust. From the perspective of this dissertation, and bearing in mind my argument that a conceptualisation of antisemitism as related to modernity opens up for a relational approach to racism, it is relevant to

underline that several of these scholars have explored the relationship between antisemitism, the Swedish state and/or notions of Swedish nationhood. This is noteworthy, since these studies bear the potential of contributing to the dialogue with the field of critical race studies, despite the low degree of interaction between the fields (Kvist Geverts and Andersson 2017).

For example, historian Lars M. Andersson has written extensively on Swedish antisemitism. In his doctoral dissertation he explored antisemitic caricatures in the Swedish press during the period 1900 to 1930, arguing that Swedish antisemitism should be understood both as part of a larger European pattern, as well as important for the construction of a Swedish national identity, which was enacted in opposition to Jewishness (Andersson 2000). He has also co-edited a book on the history of the Jewish community in Sweden (Andersson and Carlsson 2013), and explored the Swedish policy vis-à-vis Jewish refugees before and during World War II (Andersson and Kvist Geverts 2008) as well as the debate about Sweden's relation to Nazi Germany (Andersson and Tydén 2007). Moreover, labour historian Håkan Blomqvist has analysed the socialist Jewish tradition in Sweden and its complex relation to the Zionist project (2020), the linkages between antisemitism and anti-communism (2013), and antisemitism within the Swedish labour movement and its relation to Swedish nationalism, arguing that (non-dominant) segments of the labour movement regarded the category of Jews to be incompatible with socialist ideas of the Swedish nation (Blomqvist 2017, 2006). With this, Blomqvist has contributed to an understanding of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden beyond the upper classes and the state bureaucracy.

Historian Karin Kvist Geverts (2008) has explored Swedish policy vis-à-vis Jewish refugees between 1938 and 1944, in her doctoral thesis, by looking at decisions made by Swedish authorities. In her analysis, she found that Jewish refugees, not least from Eastern Europe, were discriminated against by the authorities, and that they in a certain sense appeared as "foreign elements in the nation" (p. 257). Kvist Geverts used the term "antisemitic background bustle" (p. 228) to capture forms of everyday antisemitism in Sweden during the period studied. According to her, this antisemitic background bustle made it possible for the Swedish authorities to formally reject antisemitism by regarding it as not a Swedish but German phenomenon, while at the same time regarding Jews as inherently different from non-Jewish Swedes, and therefore "hard to integrate" (pp. 254-56). In relation to Swedish nationhood, German historian Cordelia Heß has noted that the Nordic countries are partly characterised by romanticised images of them as socially, culturally and religiously homogenous societies. In particular the alleged religious homogeneity has implied a strong connection between citizenship and the

Lutheran faith, but also that religious "Others" have been placed in the role of "the enemy within" (Heß 2020).

In relation to Nazism and neo-Nazism, historian of ideas Stéphane Bruchfeldt has written about historical revisionism and Holocaust denial among neo-Nazis (1996a) and antisemitic tropes in Swedish schoolbooks (1996b). He was one of the co-writers of *Om detta må ni berätta* (*Tell ye your children*) (Bruchfeld and Levine 1998), a book commemorating the Holocaust—including testimonies, facts and poems—commissioned by the Swedish government and distributed in Swedish schools at the end of the 1990s. On the theme of the antisemitic policy of the Swedish state during the 1930s and 1940s, historian Göran Blomberg (2003) has explored the Swedish state bureaucracy and policies of "Aryanisation" as a result of Swedish antisemitism and as a political adaptation to Nazi Germany. Historian Lena Berggren (2014) has investigated the importance of antisemitism for the Swedish Nazi ideology and movement before and during World War II. Related to this, historian Heléne Lööw has conducted extensive research on the history of Swedish Nazism and neo-Nazism, covering the period from the 1920s until around 2015, exploring, among other things, the role of antisemitism for the Swedish (neo-)Nazi worldview and ideology (Lööw 2015, 2000, 2004, 1990).

Historian of ideas Henrik Bachner wrote his doctoral dissertation about the "return" of antisemitism in a Swedish post-Holocaust context (Bachner 1999). Through a study of five cases, Bachner explored antisemitism in Sweden from the end of World War II until the 1980s, in relation to the debate on the murder of Folke Bernadotte, reactions to the Holocaust, Holocaust revisionism and denial, the Zionist project, and the war between Israel and Lebanon in 1982. One argument made by Bachner is that after the Holocaust "classic antisemitism" was no longer politically legitimate, but after the Six-Day War in 1967 it could be channelled in the form of anti-Zionism, expressed as a critique of (the existence of) the State of Israel. Another salient argument in Bachner's work is the assertion that after World War II antisemitism has, as a consequence of the Holocaust, primarily been identified with Nazism and genocide, which limits the understanding of antisemitism to an extreme and marginal phenomenon, rendering antisemitic attitudes among mainstream sectors of society invisible. Bachner has also studied how antisemitism was interpreted and understood by conservative, Social Democratic and Christian opinion-makers in Sweden in the 1930s, arguing that opponents of antisemitism reproduced antisemitic attitudes by claiming that Jews were partly guilty for widespread antisemitism (Bachner 2009).

In relation to earlier forms of anti-Jewish racism, culture and migration historian Malin Thor Tureby (2005) wrote her doctoral dissertation about exiled German Jewish youth in Sweden before and during World War II. In

the methodological tradition of oral history, she has also explored life histories of Jewish refugees in Sweden, in relation to aspects such as gender, religion and nationhood (Thor Tureby 2019; Thor Tureby and Dahl 2009), and also how these stories are researched and narrated by museums (Thor Tureby 2020). Within the field of aesthetics, Rebecka Katz Thor (2018) has written a doctoral dissertation about representations of the Holocaust in films, exploring how moving images can bear witness to the genocide of Jews at a time when the last survivors will soon be gone. In relation to the narration of history, cultural historian Kristin Wagrell (2020) has analysed, through a Foucauldian genealogical method, the construction and development of the figure of "the Holocaust survivor" in Sweden during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. She shows how the memory of the Holocaust has changed over time and is dependent on a variety of social factors in Sweden, independently of the actual experiences of the survivors of the Shoah.

From the perspective of this dissertation, there are important connections to the research that has been conducted on the history of antisemitism in Sweden, first and foremost as far as the relation between antisemitism and notions of nationhood is concerned, as well as the understanding of antisemitism as structural in Swedish society. In that regard, the contributions made by Lars M. Andersson and Håkan Blomqvist seem especially relevant, since they emphasise the centrality of antisemitism in the construction of "Swedishness"; also the remark made by Cordelia Heß on how the central societal role of the Lutheran state church in the Nordic countries causes the category of Jews to be positioned as an "enemy within". Moreover, I interpret Karin Kvist Gevert's notion of an "antisemitic background bustle" as a way of reflecting Swedish society as being structurally antisemitic. Although she studied the period 1938-1944 in her dissertation, the concept can be used in a wider temporal frame to capture a structural feature of Swedish society at large. Along similar lines, I also find useful some of Bachner's assertions about the change in expressions of antisemitism in the post-Holocaust period. Although I do not engage with "new antisemitism theory", which partly influenced Bachner's dissertation, the notion that "classic antisemitism" lost its legitimacy after the defeat of Nazi Germany is pertinent when analysing contemporary anti-Jewish racism as part of the Swedish racial regime. Also, the notion that antisemitism is often regarded to be an extreme and socially marginal phenomenon, due to its association with the Holocaust, is analytically fruitful in order to move the analytical gaze from the extremes of the political spectrum to forms of everyday racism against Jews and to Swedish normality.

## Experiences of antisemitism

Ethnologist Susanne Nylund Skog has conducted interviews with Jews in Sweden about their experiences of antisemitism. In a report from 2006, she is inspired by Philomena Essed's (1991) concept of everyday racism, but explicitly refrains from using the term in her analysis. She abstains from the concept of racism in the case of Jews with the argument she doesn't want to label her interviewees' experiences of discrimination as racism, due to the fact that their Jewishness isn't generally visible and that they often pass as white, in reference to Sara Ahmed's (2011) concept of whiteness. As I understand it, this mirrors her interviewees' own understanding (in most cases) of themselves as lacking experiences of antisemitism or other forms of racism, although they recount subtle experiences of differentiation, discrimination and exotification (Nylund Skog 2006). It appears that a reason for the interviewees in her material not labelling their experiences as antisemitism is that they did not want to appear as victims or as "whining" (*gnälliga*) (p. 90). In later interview studies with Jewish women, Nylund Skog continues exploring how her informants negotiate whiteness, and she notes how the decision to wear or not wear the Star of David in a Swedish context constitutes a means to make one's Jewishness visible or to conceal it. Also, she discusses the topic of intergenerational fear of antisemitism among her interviewees, how the cultural practice of male circumcision is important for them, and how they have experienced forms of exclusion due to Protestant traditions during their time at school (Nylund Skog 2014, 2012).

Social anthropologist Anna Sarri Krantz (2018) through in-depth interviews has explored the experiences of grandchildren of Holocaust survivors in Sweden. This is a group that she refers to as the "third generation of survivors". She interviewed them on their approach to memory work, cultural-religious rituals, and the social structures within the Jewish community in Stockholm. To some extent she also explored experiences of antisemitism, particularly in adolescent years. She found that several interviewees had at school experienced verbal attacks against them as Jews, and also that schoolmates had drawn the swastika on their school lockers and given the Nazi salute while standing nearby. Sarri Krantz too discusses the effects of antisemitic threats against the Jewish community in Stockholm, who need to take a considerable amount of security measures in order to protect themselves from physical attack.

In relation to antisemitism in more recent years, Wigerfelt and Wigerfelt (2016; 2015) have conducted interviews with Jews in the city of Malmö in southern Sweden on their experiences of antisemitism. They argue that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict plays a pivotal role in such experiences among their

interviewees, who feel that they are collectively blamed for the actions taken by the Israeli government, and that this leads to both verbal and physical attacks against Jewish individuals and institutions. They also use the concept of "latent antisemitism" to denote those experiences that are not expressed as direct attacks but rather occur in the forms of "jokes" or subtle comments. They found as well that many interviewees hid Jewish symbols in order to avoid being targets of antisemitism.

David Grobgeld and Moa Bursell (2021) have analysed how Jews in Sweden maintain what the researchers regard to be ethnic boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. They argue that experiences of antisemitism have entrenched perceptions among their interviewees about a Jewish ethnic distinctiveness, which the researchers regard as a strategy to resist assimilation into the Swedish mainstream. In their interview study, they found that many interviewees were careful not to tell new acquaintances about their Jewish identity until a certain level of trust had been gained. Moreover, the interviewees expressed concern about what they regarded to be increased levels of antisemitism in Swedish society (pp. 9-10).

A recent report on antisemitism among schoolchildren in the city of Malmö has found that many Jewish schoolchildren experience various forms of racism, ranging from physical and verbal threats to racist "jokes" and subtle forms of differentiation. It is also argued that Swedish schools are centred around Protestant-secular notions of what constitutes Swedish "normality", and that Jewish cultural practices and legacy are often marginalised or treated in a superficial way, which in turn suggests that Jewishness is reduced to being a matter of antisemitism instead of being affirmed as a positive identity, to the detriment of the well-being of Jewish schoolchildren (Katzin 2021).

In other words, the relatively few qualitative studies on contemporary experiences of antisemitism in Sweden show that there is a worry among Jews in Sweden about increasing levels of antisemitism, not least in relation to Israel-Palestine. They also show that Jews in Sweden deploy various strategies in order to avoid being involuntarily categorised as Jewish and hence risking antisemitic verbal or physical violence or subtle forms of discrimination and differentiation. The ability to pass as white and thereby render their Jewishness invisible in the public arena appears as a distinctive feature among at least some Jews in Sweden to handle the fear of antisemitism. Although these studies do not theoretically address antisemitism as a form of racism, I believe the empirical findings in these studies concerning experiences of antisemitism are highly relevant for this study, and a fundamental point of departure for creating a space for a dialogue with the field of critical race studies and make possible a relational approach to antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism.

In addition to these qualitative studies, which are highly relevant for this dissertation project, it should be noted that scholars in Sweden have also conducted quantitative studies on antisemitism. For example, Lars Dencik and Karl Marosi have combined quantitative data from eight European countries, measuring levels of antisemitic attitudes among the general population, and perceptions among Jews of antisemitism, respectively (Dencik and Marosi 2017, 2016). A central finding that the scholars put forward is an apparent discrepancy, in the cases of Sweden and the United Kingdom, between these two studies, in the sense that both the UK and Sweden presented a considerably lower degree of what were classified as antisemitic attitudes than the degree of the Jewish population's perception of antisemitism. One possible explanation for this discrepancy, suggested by the scholars, is that the attitude survey on antisemitic attitudes mostly explored "classic antisemitism", whereas Sweden and the UK might have a higher number of cases of what the scholars conceptualise as Israel-derived antisemitism or Enlightenment antisemitism.

Over the past two decades, state-owned Forum för levande historia (Forum for Living History) has conducted various attitude surveys, among both the general population and school pupils, in which attitudes regarding antisemitism have been part of the survey (Ring and Morgentau 2004; Bachner and Ring 2005; Löwander and Lange 2010; Severin 2014; Bachner and Bevelander 2021). The last study made a longitudinal analysis through a comparison with the attitude survey conducted in 2005. Central findings in this study were that antisemitic attitudes as a whole diminished among the general population in Sweden between 2005 and 2020, and that more people in Sweden reject antisemitic ideas, but that antisemitic attitudes still persist among a not-irrelevant minority of the population (Bachner and Bevelander 2021).

## Contributions from the field of cultural production

In addition to this academic literature on antisemitism and Jewish history, it should be noted that there have also been seminal contributions in the field of cultural production on Jewish experiences and antisemitism in Sweden. For example, the magazine *Jewish Chronicle* (*Judisk Krönika*), founded in 1932, has been an important forum for transmitting knowledge about Jewish life in Sweden and for discussions about antisemitism and conditions for the Jewish minority in Sweden, not least under emblematic journalist and author Jackie Jakubowski during his time as the magazine's editor-in-chief between 1980 and 2015. In the sphere of cultural production, the Judiska teatern (Jewish Theatre) in Stockholm, which was active between 1995 and 2015, should be mentioned. As a privately owned and financed theatre, it had an experimentalist approach to drama and

stage performance, including poetry, music, and art installations, and took a Jewish cultural perspective on its productions.[12]

Among Swedish public intellectuals who have contributed to discussions about antisemitism and Jewish life, one could mention internationally renowned author and playwright Peter Weiss, who was born in Germany and emigrated to Sweden as a consequence of the Nazi rise to power. The theatrical play *The Investigation* (Weiss 1966), about the Auschwitz trials, and the novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (Weiss [1975] 2005), about the struggle against European fascism in the 1930s and 1940s, are examples of Weiss' significant intellectual contribution to cultural life in Sweden. For public discussions about Nazi Germany and antisemitism, journalist Arne Ruth, who was editor-in-chief and cultural editor at the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* between 1982 and 1998, should be mentioned. Through an extensive production, Ruth has analysed antisemitism in Nazi Germany, but also in Swedish society, and cultural and ethnic heterogeneity (Ruth 2001, 1984; Karlsson and Ruth 1983). Journalist and author Anita Goldman's texts, some relating to spirituality rooted in a Jewish cultural tradition with a pronounced female perspective, and others concerning the situation in Israel-Palestine (Goldman 2005, 2002, 1998), have also been part of Swedish public discussions about Jewishness and Jewish life. Moreover, journalist and author Göran Rosenberg has been awarded Sweden's most prestigious literary prize for his biography of his father (Rosenberg 2012), who survived the ghetto in Lodz and several concentration camps. In this book, Rosenberg described his parents' process of starting a new life in Sweden after the War, and how they dealt with the memory of the genocide. Rosenberg has also written about the situation in Israel-Palestine (Rosenberg 1996), based partly on his own memories from a period he spent in Israel during his youth, and has explored Jewish life in Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s through a biography of the rabbi in Stockholm Marcus Ehrenpreis (Rosenberg 2021). The aforementioned Jackie Jakubowski has also written books about antisemitism and Jewish life (Jakubowski 2009; Jakubowski and Ahlmark 1992; Jakubowski 2005), beyond his work at the *Jewish Chronicle*.

In addition to the works by Göran Rosenberg and Anita Goldman, there is an entire genre of biographical and autobiographical Jewish-Swedish literature. There are the cases of Holocaust survivors who have written about their own experiences of the Shoah (sometimes also in a fictionalised form), such as Cordelia Edvarsson (1987), Zenia Larsson (1968), Hédi Fried (1992) and Dina Rajs and Jovan Rajs (2018). Currently, there is also a growing

12 https://www.judiskateatern.se

literature by children of Holocaust survivors. For example, Nina Einhorn (2005) has written about her mother's escape from the ghetto in Warsaw, Kay Schueler (2008) about his family's history of escape from Nazism and antisemitism, and Rolf Tardell (2014) has given an account of interviewing his mother, who grew up in France and was deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. On the theme of growing up as the child of Holocaust survivors, Leif Zern (2012) has written about his childhood and his navigation between the community of Orthodox Jews in Stockholm and secular, non-Jewish society, a theme that has also been picked up by Kenneth Hermele (2017), who grew up in what he described as a "*shtetl*" in Stockholm, and his brother Bernt Hermele (2016), who engages in a discussion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a Swedish-Jewish perspective, after his mother was killed in a suicide attack in Tel Aviv. Bernt Hemele has also written a book about Jewish life in Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s, and the attempt of the Jewish upper-middle class in Stockholm to "integrate" into non-Jewish Swedish ways of life, in the shadow of World War II and the Holocaust (B. Hermele 2018). Journalist Margit Silberstein (2021) has written about her childhood in Sweden, growing up with parents who had survived the Holocaust, and explicitly discusses the effects of transference of the trauma of genocide. In the form of an exchange of letters, Salomon Schulman and Mose Apelblat conduct a discussion about their memories from growing up in southern Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s, their parents' trauma as survivors of the Shoah, contemporary antisemitism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Apelblat and Schulman 2018). Emilia Degenius (2014) has written about her childhood in Warsaw and her forced exile to Sweden after the antisemitic March events in Poland in 1968, a theme that has also been explored by journalist Maciej Zaremba (2018). Beyond the realm of prose, poet Hanna Rajs Lundström (2018) has in poetic form explored the themes of antisemitism and family trauma in a context of multiple Swedish racisms and the presence of neo-Nazi threats. More recent non-academic publications about Jewish life in Sweden include the anthology *Jude in Sverige* (*Jew in Sweden*), in which 29 contributors discuss what Jewishness means for them (Pedersen 2021), and *@Stoltjude: om judiskt liv i Sverige* (*@ProudJew: about Jewish life in Sweden*), a collection of testimonies about Jewish life and antisemitism from a variety of young Jewish people in Sweden that had been shared via an Instagram-account owned by the Jewish Youth Federation (Tojzner et al. 2022). It has been distributed freely to schools and libraries in Sweden to

increase awareness about Jewish life there and to counter antisemitism.[13] This vast amount of non-academic literature on Jewish life in Sweden is highlighted to showcase the heterogeneity of perspectives, experiences and identities that are present in Swedish literature.

## Final remarks: contributing to an ongoing dialogue

This chapter, dedicated to an overview of previous research on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, has addressed the existing gap in scholarship between, on the one hand, the field of antisemitism studies and, on the other, the field of critical race studies, a separation which seemingly reflects a view of antisemitism and racism as separate social phenomena. The chapter has also shown that there have been explicit attempts to bridge the two fields. I have discussed how there are different conceptualisations of what antisemitism is, and have laid forward the argument that those scholars who explicitly or implicitly emphasise the role of European modernity—in a broad sense—to explore contemporary forms of antisemitism make possible an understanding of antisemitism as a *relational* phenomenon, thereby potentially opening up for a dialogue with critical race scholars. In contrast, conceptualisations of antisemitism as primarily channelled through conspiracy theories and/or in relation to the situation in Israel-Palestine tend to analytically isolate antisemitism as a social phenomenon, downplaying its relational character and thereby making a dialogue between the fields of antisemitism and critical race studies more difficult.

I have highlighted important contributions made within the field of antisemitism studies in Sweden which can be read as opening up for a dialogue with critical race studies, particularly those emphasising the relation between antisemitism and constructions of "Swedishness", and those that understand antisemitism to be structural rather than reducible to an extreme or marginal phenomenon in Swedish society. Likewise, the qualitative studies that have explored experiences of antisemitism among Jews in Sweden are highly relevant for the field of critical race studies and have the potential to open up for a relational approach to antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism. This dissertation, located in the field of critical race studies, wishes to contribute to advancing the dialogue between this field of research and that of antisemitism studies by

13 https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/instagramkontot-stolt-jude-blir-bok-ska-motverka-antisemitism

strengthening the connections that already exist between the two fields. In this spirit, in the next chapter I will outline a theoretical framework based on an understanding of a critical-race perspective as fruitful for an analysis of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime.

# Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

## Introduction

Having discussed an overview of the field and the location of this study in relation to previous research, it is now time to address the theoretical framework of the dissertation. In this chapter I will elaborate on the central theoretical discussions and the core analytical concepts that will guide my analysis of the empirical material. I build on various feminist and critical race scholars working with different concepts and lines of thought, with the purpose of bringing them together in a way that is relevant for an analysis of anti-Jewish racism as part of the Swedish racial regime.

The chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, "Racism, European modernity, and the nation", I will discuss my theoretical approach to racism as a social phenomenon, primarily inspired by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, as well as a few central analytical concepts from other scholars that I find particularly relevant for the thesis. Here, I also discuss anti-Jewish racism as part of a larger web of racial relations and as something that exists among a variety of European racisms. Further, I discuss the relation between racism, the modern state and ideas of nationhood, inspired by the works of Étienne Balibar, Anne McClintock and Nira Yuval-Davis. I try to grasp theoretically how the creation of national communities and their minoritised groups in Europe can be understood to be part of a larger geopolitical development, including the projects of European colonialism and imperialism, and I explore the role of gender and sexuality for the construction of the nation as an imagined community. Thereby, I try to link the national-colonial tie to the categories of gender and sexuality, arguing for the relevance of constructions of a variety of minoritised groups for an exploration of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, and I discuss how notions of "Swedish exceptionalism" and "Swedish gender equality" constitute hegemonic forms of Swedish nationalism. I also build on Fatima El-Tayeb's notion of European "racelessness" and discuss the paradoxes of "race" as a social category for contemporary anti-Jewish racism in a European context.

In the second section, "Truly belonging to the Swedish nation", I discuss the importance of ideas of "true nationals" in contemporary racism, the understanding of the nation as a "racialised community", and how this relates to the "politics of belonging" of the nation-state, inspired by the works of Nandita Sharma and Nira Yuval-Davis. Expanding on Marianne Gullestad's line of thought, I explore the notion of "sameness" as a particular Scandinavian dimension of national boundary-making, and link this to the analysis made by Butler et al. about the continuity of Protestantism and secularism. I suggest that these concepts—"truly national", "racialised community", "politics of belonging", "sameness" and "the Protestant secular"—are relevant to explore anti-Jewish racism in Sweden in relation to notions of "Swedishness" and the religious-secular divide.

In the final remarks, I bring these two sections together, summarising their common theoretical potential for an analysis of anti-Jewish racism within the Swedish regime.

# Racism, European modernity, and the nation

## Approaching racism: modern, dynamic, rational and relational

Since this doctoral project studies racism in the Swedish context, the theoretical focus of the dissertation engages with *European* racism and the historical and social structures and discourses that frame racism in Europe. While I agree with many critical race scholars that racism permeates modernity in its entirety, including countries in the Global South, the dissertation aims to contribute to a body of research exploring Europe's evolving racial structures. By focusing on European and Swedish racism, and thereby challenging notions of European universalism, the thesis can hopefully also contribute to the anti-colonial attempt to "provincialise Europe" (Chakrabarty 2000) and to unmask a few of the workings of the European "rhetoric of power" (Wallerstein 2006).

One scholar who has inspired my conceptual understanding of racism is Puerto Rican sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. According to Bonilla-Silva (1997), one challenge for research on racism is that many social scientists have an idealist conception of racism. For example, he describes how racism often has been regarded as a psychological or psychosocial phenomenon to be examined at the individual level, instead of understanding it as part of a larger societal pattern that structures society. Oftentimes racism has also been understood to be something static and unchangeable, as if there were a certain prototype of what racism is, instead of as something that changes over time

and space. Moreover, Bonilla-Silva argues that in contemporary discourses racism tends to be understood as a remnant from a historical past, instead of something that is actively produced and reproduced through contemporary actions and discursive practices. Also, Bonilla-Silva contends that the supposed irrationality of racism is often emphasised, which conveys the message that racism is something that can be "cured" through education and by spreading allegedly rational "knowledge". Finally, racism is recurrently reduced to overt expressions of racial stereotypes, which renders its more subtle expressions, as well as of larger racial societal structures, invisible (Bonilla-Silva 1997, 467-69).

Against these conceptualisations conveying racism as something obsolete, monolithic and anti-modern, Bonilla-Silva argues for an understanding of racism as a set of social phenomena that are not marginal to but, on the contrary, at the core and indeed constitutive of, modern society. He further argues that racism is something that is dynamic in its character, changing over time and space, that it is rational in the sense that it responds to the interests of certain groups, and that it is affected by and has effects on social relations between groups and various social structures in modern society (pp. 475-76). Therefore racism must be explored in relation to the particularities of time and space, linking together both micro and macro levels of analysis, and its relations to other social structures must be scrutinised.

With regard to this conceptualisation of racism, there are a few analytical concepts that I find particularly interesting for the endeavour of exploring anti-Jewish racism as part of a larger web of racial and social relations. Bonilla-Silva uses the term "racialised social system", which he defines as "societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races" (Bonilla-Silva 1997, 469). Another example is the term "racial formation", used by Omi and Winant, to refer to those societal processes "by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (Omi and Winant 1994, 61). In Sweden, researchers Diana Mulinari and Anders Neergaard, who are inspired by both Bonilla-Silva and Omi and Winant, use the term "racial regime", which is defined as a "societal struggle around social relations in and across nation-states, configuring humanness and citizens by the constructions of race" (D. Mulinari and Neergaard 2017, 2), thereby emphasising the importance of the nation-state in the configuration of both racism and the antiracist struggle. Furthermore, they argue that the concept of "racial regime" is useful to capture the interplay between "social structures and everyday life, through which the meanings of race and racial categories are created,

negotiated and challenged" (p. 6), thus highlighting both the changing character of racism and processes of racialisation, but also human agency in relation to social structures. These analytical concepts—racial regime, racial formation and racialised social system—aim to inscribe racism within societal structures and social relations at the crossroads between political economy, nation-states and social movements. I find these concepts to be analytically productive for exploring anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, drawing attention to both its dynamic, and sometimes contradictory, character as well as its interrelationality with other social structures.

Another analytical concept that has become prominent in critical race scholarship, but also in antiracist activist circles, is the concept of "racialisation", coined by Robert Miles (1989). Emphasising the processual character of racism, racialisation denotes those processes by which notions of "race" and racial characteristics ascribed to groups of people are constituted relationally and contextually. In that sense, the concept of racialisation builds on an understanding of race and racism as something that occurs in the present, something that is constantly and actively being done to people. Important to stress is that from Miles' perspective white people are also subjected to processes of racialisation, in the sense that they are attributed notions of "race". Although these processes of racialisation occur in a hierarchically structured society, with radically different effects on different groups of people, ordering them in positions of relative superiority or inferiority, respectively, Miles' use of the concept implies that in modern society *everybody* is necessarily racialised. I emphasise this because I find it analytically requisite for exploring how Swedish racism operates and the effect this has for the category of Jews in Sweden, not least in relation to non-Jewish whites, as well as to racial notions of both Jewishness and hegemonic Swedishness in the Swedish racial regime.

Thus, inspired by Bonilla-Silva's conceptualisation of racism, I explore anti-Jewism racism in Sweden from the premise that it is something that characterises modern Swedish society, that it is dynamic in its character and expressions, that it corresponds to certain interests of power, and that it exists in relation to other forms of racism and other social structures. Through the concepts of "racialised social system", "racial formation" and "racial regime", I emphasise my understanding of anti-Jewish racism as a part of a web of racial relations, intersecting with a variety of social structures, where the relation to the nation-state and the struggle for being recognised as human are fundamental. Through the use of Miles' concept of racialisation, I explore anti-Jewish racism as something that is actively being done, and wherein also notions of race in relation to whiteness are important for understanding how the category of Jews in Sweden is racialised. By this approach, I wish to avoid

a perception of anti-Jewish racism as separate from other forms of racism, but rather to view it as a specific form of European and Swedish racism, related to other forms of racism, whose future is open for both continuities and ruptures.

## Various forms of racism

Racism comes in many different forms and is expressed in various ways. Critical race scholars therefore use different approaches, conceptualisations and terminologies to explore racism as part of European modernity. For example, Robert Miles (1993) notes that there is both a European racism of the "interior", denoting historical racism against racial minorities within the European states, as well as one of the "exterior", referring to the racism that was part of the extra-European colonial enterprise. Following this understanding of racism, much of today's European (and North American) racism can be understood as a product of the external racism that was spawned through European colonialism, including transatlantic slavery, annihilation of a vast part of the indigenous population of the Americas, subjugation of non-European territories and their natural resources, erasure of non-European economic, political and cultural institutions and structures for the benefit of European trade and manufacturing; also the continuous unequal world order, including exploitation of the labour force in the Global South, and global migration patterns forcing people from the Global South to take low-income jobs in the Global North. Following this logic, the "internal racism" of the European states would then include anti-Jewish racism inside Europe, but also racism against the Roma and Sinti, as well as Northern European racism against Southern Europeans, and Western European racism against Eastern Europeans. Racism against the Sámi in the Nordic countries, following a logic of "internal colonisation" (Naum and Nordin 2013), could maybe be understood as involving parts of both "external" and "internal" "racism". According to Miles, "internal racism" gives birth to logics of state power requiring processes of "nationalisation", in which it becomes crucial for the state to categorise different groups of people as either belonging to the nation or not (Miles 1993, 80-104).

Another set of analytical concepts is "exploitative racism" and "exclusive racism", referring to racism in relation to capitalist exploitation and those forms of racism that are not clearly linked to surplus extraction from labour, respectively. For example, there is a vast literature from different academic traditions that builds on Marx's analysis of the importance of the transatlantic slave trade for the emergence of modern capitalism (Marx 1976), showing how racism has been at the core of labour exploitation and the development of

modern states. In this tradition, scholars analyse divisions of labour on both a global scale (between the Global North and Global South) or between core and periphery (Amin 1976). In addition they explore how the national labour markets are racially structured and to a higher degree locate workers racialised as non-white in low-income sectors with more precarious working conditions than those racialised as white (Ignatiev 1995). In this case, "exploitative racism" denotes forms of racism that enable exploitation of labour power, through racialisation of some people as non-white (Roediger 1991). This explains the function of racism in the search of capital accumulation, as well as the racially segregated labour market in today's Europe (and beyond). For example, when women from the Global South are portrayed in the public debate as especially suitable for performing reproductive labour (Farris 2017; Bridget Anderson 2000)—including care-giving, cooking and cleaning—this can be understood as an expression of gendered exploitative racism.

On the other side of the coin, exclusive racisms are forms of racism where, in one way or another, people are excluded not only from labour exploitation, but also from human existence. For example, when countries in the Global North deport migrants from the Global South, this can be seen as an example of exclusive racism, and likewise other state-driven policies and actions, such as imperial or neo-colonial wars that murder people racialised as non-white (Mbembe 2019; Butler 2009). Moreover, the Shoah, the extermination of indigenous populations in the European colonies, and the European border policies that lead to people drowning in the Mediterranean Sea or in the English Channel, would be other examples of the most extreme forms of an "exclusive racism".

I believe these different categorisations of racism—internal/external, exploitative/exclusive, but also the notion of "colour racism" in contrast to so-called "cultural racism" (Grosfoguel 2016)—mirror the complexity and variety of racisms in modern society. Discussions about what "race" as a social construct and racism actually mean (Miles and Brown 2003; Lentin 2020; Wekker 2016) and how race is expressed differently—in relation to phenotypical traits, culture, religion, territory—in various contexts (Kastoryano 2005), also reflect the multifaceted character of racism. While it is valuable to explore how racism can be expressed and lived in many different ways, a strict separation between various forms of racism is oftentimes far from easy to make. One example of this is how contemporary Swedish and European migration policies shape the labour market through the threat of deportation, which happens to some migrants, thereby excluding them from the Global North, while others live under the constant threat of deportation, increasing labour precarity and exploitation (Sager 2011; Söderman 2019; Krifors 2017).

Concerning this difficulty in separating different forms of racism from one another, political philosopher Étienne Balibar has emphasised their non-dichotomous character:

> Lastly, confronting the questions of Nazism and colonial racism (or segregation in the United States) has broadly speaking forced upon us the distinction between a racism of *extermination* or elimination (an 'exclusive' racism) and a racism of *oppression* or exploitation (an 'inclusive' racism), the one aiming to purify the social body of the stain or danger the inferior races may represent, the other seeking, by contrast, to hierarchize and partition society. But it immediately emerges that, even in extreme cases, neither of these forms ever exist in the pure state: thus Nazism combined extermination and deportation, 'the final solution' and slavery, and colonial imperialisms have practiced both forced labour, the establishment of caste regimes, ethnic segregation and 'genocides' or the systematic massacre of a population. (Balibar 1991, 43-44)

I read Balibar's text as a warning to separate what might be perceived as different forms of racism, and as a reminder that, while analytical differentiations of racism might correspond to various expressions of racism, this does not imply that they necessarily mirror separate structures of power. Although racism might be categorised as appearing in different forms, the boundaries between them are porous, and Balibar argues that it is impossible to completely separate one of these forms of racism from another. In other words, Balibar's emphasis on the "messiness" of racism serves as a reminder that no form of racism, including anti-Jewish racism, exists in isolation but is part of the wider racial and social web.

## The nexus between race and nation

Contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden is not "exploitative" in the sense that it structures the labour market, although this might have been the case historically, not least at the time of the migration of Eastern European Jews to Sweden around the late 1800s and early 1900s (Svanberg and Tydén 2005; Carlsson 2021). Nor is anti-Jewish racism linked to disputes over territory or national resources, as Swedish anti-Sámi racism is. Nor is it limited to the same extreme forms of exclusionary racism that enabled the Shoah, although continuous violent expressions against Jews as a group, of which we saw examples in the introductory chapter, persist. Despite important historical changes, I believe forms of exclusion in relation to notions of nationhood and "Swedishness" are still present in contemporary forms of anti-Jewish racism. I also think it is crucial to study these expressions of exclusionary racism in

relation to the nexus between the national and colonial, to thereby see how anti-Jewish racism is part of a larger and complex web of racial relations, also those linked to forms of alleged "external racism" or "exploitative racism". By this means it becomes possible to explore how anti-Jewish racism balances between different and contradictory notions of "otherness" and "belonging", at a time when the struggle against anti-Jewish racism is attributed a special discursive position in contemporary Swedish public debates and state policies.

For Balibar, there is a strong interrelationality between racism and nationalist ideologies, not merely in the case of overtly racist and exclusionary policies but also in more "benign" or inclusionary forms of national discourse. Without claiming them to be synonymous phenomena, and without actually arguing that they would have to presuppose each other at a hypothetical level (Balibar 1991, 42-43), Balibar asserts that it is necessary to analyse racism and nationalism as two phenomena that exist in close relation to each other. For example, he argues:

> No nation, that is, no national state, has an ethnic basis, which means that nationalism cannot be defined as an ethnocentrism except precisely in the sense of the product of a *fictive* ethnicity. (p. 49, emphasis in original)

Thus, according to Balibar, the nation is founded through the invention of a "fictive ethnicity" that is contended to correspond to the territory of a given state, in order to give legitimacy to it as a nation-state. In that sense, his argument recalls Benedict Anderson's (2016) idea of the nation as an "imagined community". In addition to this, Balibar's emphasis that this imagined community has to *create* an ethnicity in order to sustain itself ideologically points to the close relation between the notion of ethnicity—and by extension that of "race"—and the nation as a social phenomenon. For Balibar, there is a strong line of continuity here throughout the history of modernity, as well as before the nineteenth-century creation of the modern nation-states:

> […] I shall say then, first, that in the historical 'field' of nationalism, there is always a reciprocity of determination between this and racism. This reciprocity shows itself initially in the way in which the development of nationalism and its official utilization by the state transforms antagonisms and persecutions that have quite other origins into racism in the modern sense (and ascribes the verbal markers of ethnicity to them). This runs from the way in which, since the times of the *Reconquista* in Spain, theological anti-Judaism was transposed into genealogical exclusion based on 'purity of blood' at the same time as the *raza* was launching itself upon the conquest of the New World, down to the way in which, in modern Europe, the new 'dangerous classes' of the international

> proletariat tend to be subsumed under the category of 'immigration', which becomes the main name given to race within the crisis-torn nations of the post-colonial era. (Balibar 1991, 57)

According to Balibar, this means that there is a tendency in modernity for the state and for nationalism as a modern ideology to constantly create "races" out of categories that are not necessarily bound to notions of "blood" or genetics. In that sense, religion, class and colonialism are intimately connected to racial classification systems created by the state. It is interesting that Balibar brings up the historical importance of the *Reconquista* in the Iberian Peninsula, including its blatant anti-Jewish racism, and how the nascent Spanish state created a system of racial division—both in Europe and in the colonised Americas—prior to the emergence of the nineteenth-century nation-state. According to Balibar, there is therefore a strong connection between racism and the modern state, even before the invention of nationalism and racial biology. Moreover, there is also a strong connection between the racism that is internal to the state and the one that is expressed externally through its colonial and imperialist projects. For example, Balibar notes the simultaneity of post-Reconstruction racial segregation in the United States and the emergence of the USA as an imperialist power, as well as the establishment of the French colonial project and anti-immigration racism in the late nineteenth century (p. 57). Thus there appears to be a continuous movement between the social phenomena of racism and nationalism, deeply tied together, both in the Global North and in the Global South.

Following Balibar, and bringing his line of reasoning to the Swedish case, we can understand the Swedish state as historically having built on—and continuously building on—the creation of a "fictive Swedish ethnicity", excluding those not labelled as "Swedish". If nationhood is built on notions of race, and nations are crucial for racism, then it becomes relevant to explore how racism against Jews is expressed through notions of the "Swedish nation". While the idea of what is or is not part of this alleged "Swedishness" is subject to historical change, "Swedishness"—understood as an imagined community built on notions of race/ethnicity—becomes a valuable analytical tool to explore forms of contemporary anti-Jewish racism, since the question of to what extent Jews are thought to belong to this alleged "Swedishness" becomes pivotal to expressions of contemporary anti-Jewish racism. Moreover, given Balibar's emphasis on the *global* nature of racism—the fact that the state's internal racism correlates with its colonial and imperialist projects—it becomes important to analyse the nature of Swedish racialisation of Jews in relation to Sweden as a part of the Global North and of Europe in particular.

Journalist and author Arne Ruth (1984) noted in the 1980s that Swedish nationalism was different from many other contemporary nationalisms. Unlike other (Western) states that built their nationalism on romanticising pictures of the past, Swedish nationalism seemed on the contrary to fully embrace modernity and fiercely reject traditionalism and preindustrial values. This modernist stance, which Ruth perceived as resembling US American nationalist notions of the United States as the "first new nation", combined with an emphasis on Sweden's alleged international moral superiority, was from Ruth's perspective a defining feature for a Swedish "national self-consciousness" that made it possible for Sweden to use *internationalism* as a form of "Ersatz nationalism" (p. 68). Ruth saw this lack of a sense of traditional heritage and of national romanticising as a consequence of Sweden's historical decline as a major regional power, a decline that induced Sweden to depict itself as "humanitarian" rather than "heroic". Ruth also understood the Social Democratic project of the Folkhem (People's Home)—a form of national cohesion and welfare politics built on class compromise—as having an analogy with Sweden's stance as a neutral state during the World Wars and in the Cold War period, when Sweden could portray itself as a rational and peacekeeping country, advocating for a dialogue between different international powers. On the international scene, Sweden could also portray itself, through its position as a "small country", as inherently different from the great Western colonial powers, arguing that it possessed a certain moral superiority over many other Western countries due to Sweden's alleged lack of colonial history—thereby reflecting a sense of "amnesia" of Sweden's own colonial past (Thomasson 2020). These features—Sweden's neutrality, its balancing stance between different geopolitical interests, and the notion of the country's moral superiority vis-à-vis great Western powers—created the idea of Sweden's national interest as compatible with world justice and paved the way for a national consciousness of Sweden being truly "exceptional" (p. 92) and "universal" among other nations. Thus, from Ruth's perspective, Sweden's lack of romanticising of its own historical past and its emphasis on its international commitment constituted a particular form of nationalist ideology: "Swedish exceptionalism". However, Ruth also suggested that this "Swedish exceptionalism" was coming to an end, due to the macroeconomic and cultural changes that were taking place in Sweden in the 1980s.

Almost three decades after Arne Ruth, scholars of racism Karl-Ulrik Schierup and Alexandra Ålund (2011) expand on this, arguing that many features of "Swedish exceptionalism" are approaching an end. Using the term differently from Ruth, Schierup and Ålund understand the notion of "Swedish exceptionalism" as primarily related to Sweden's welfare policies and the

establishment in the 1970s of extensive social, cultural and political rights to all its inhabitants, regardless of formal citizenship, combined with what the authors define as "a generous asylum policy and permissive rules for family unification […] backed by guarantees for fast naturalisation" (Schierup and Ålund 2011, 48). Thereby, Sweden constituted a specific "model of multicultural citizenship", defined by the "egalitarian policies of the corporatist welfare compact" as well as "a farsighted legislative and political approach to new ethnic minorities' access to social, political and civil rights", both within a racially organised structure of labour (p. 48). According to Shierup and Ålund, this Swedish exceptionalism has eroded due to the pressure of neoliberal policies, not least since Sweden's entry into the European Union, and a changed migration policy and stigmatisation of those racialised as "immigrants", combined with a public debate increasingly emphasising the importance of migrants' adherence to alleged "Swedish values". From a somewhat different, but complementary, perspective, sociologists Gabriella Elgenius and Jens Rydgren (2019) have also remarked that "Swedish exceptionalism" has come to an end, but attribute this to the entry of the Sweden Democrats into the Swedish parliament in 2010. In their view, it is the growth of the ethnonationalism that the Sweden Democrats embody that signals an end to this "Swedish exceptionalism", although they don't elaborate on the concept per se.

Inspired by these different approaches to the notion of "Swedish exceptionalism", I use the concept to denote a hegemonic form of a Swedish nationalistic ideology that understands Sweden to be morally superior to other nations, more modern than other nations, more progressive than other nations, and as lacking the forms of nationalistic romanticising that are attributed to other nations. These are features that make Sweden "exceptional" in the eyes of this nationalistic ideology. At the same time, I agree with Schierup and Ålund as well as with Elgenius and Rydgren that Sweden's changes in migration policy and in the public debate surrounding chauvinist and racist notions of "Swedish values" imply a shift toward a nationalistic romanticising that used to be less pronounced, or at least pronounced differently. However, regardless how overtly pronounced Swedish nationalistic romanticising is, the point is that Swedish exceptionalism implies a form of nationalistic ideology also under the disguise of being non-nationalistic and therefore more enlightened, modern and progressive than other nations. From the perspective of this doctoral project, the implication of the nationalistic ideology of "Swedish exceptionalism" that Sweden is portrayed as modern, progressive and (paradoxically) non-nationalistic seems relevant for the exploration of anti-Jewish racism within the Swedish racial regime.

## The gendered national-colonial tie

In order to discuss the relation between forms of Swedish racism and Sweden's position in the Global North, I have been inspired by feminist scholar Anne McClintock's work (1995) on the nexus between the colonial and the national, and in particular her theoretical attempt to bridge the gap between the construction of the European nation-states and their relation to the European former colonies. In her book *Imperial Leather*, McClintock combines a Marxist theoretical tradition with applied (Freudian) psychoanalysis to explore how race, gender and sexuality were cornerstones for the project of British colonialism, but also how colonialism was pivotal to the construction of the British nation. According to McClintock, there is a strong connection between the European colonial project and the construction of the European nation-states, not only in terms of exploitation of material and human resources that were essential for accumulation of capital in the colonial metropolis, but also ideologically for the construction of a notion of European nations:

> In my view, imperialism emerged as a contradictory and ambiguous project, shaped as much by tensions within metropolitan policy and conflicts within colonial administrations—at best, ad hoc and opportunistic affairs—as by the varied cultures and circumstances into which colonials intruded and the conflicting responses and resistances with which they were met. For this reason, I remain unconvinced that the sanctioned binaries—colonizer-colonized, self-other, dominance-resistance, metropolis-colony, colonial-postcolonial—are adequate to the task of accounting for, let alone strategically opposing, the tenacious legacies of imperialism. (p. 15)

For McClintock, the construction of the colonial, non-European "Other" is also part of the construction of boundaries between the national self and non-national "Other" internally in Europe. For example, while the racist constructions of colonised subjects in Africa as "primitive", "lagging behind", "lacking culture" etc. made it possible to construct the United Kingdom as "civilised" and "modern", the same hierarchically ordered dichotomies were active in the construction of what was considered "British" in relation to what was considered "Irish", for example. Likewise, the European colonial project not only required an ideological foundation based on ideas of European superiority, but also contributed to forming and accentuating power hierarchies within Europe, both as far as race was concerned—i.e. the construction of a racial national community—and hierarchies when it came to class, gender and sexuality. For example, McClintock shows how the British bourgeois man in the nineteenth century was constructed in opposition both to the colonised

subject (not least in Africa) as well as to British bourgeois women and to workers in the British metropolis. In that sense, gender and sexuality were highly present in the ideological legitimisation of racial and class hierarchies that were formed in the nineteenth century, not least through the notion of "family":

> In the course of the nineteenth century, the social function of the great service families were [*sic*] displaced onto the national bureaucracies, while the image of the family was projected onto these nationalisms as their shadowy, naturalized form. Since the subordination of woman to man and child to adult was deemed a natural fact, hierarchies within the nation could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial — the "national family," the global "family of nations," the colony as a "family of black children ruled over by a white father" — depended in this way on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children within the domestic sphere. (pp. 357-58)

Thus, for McClintock, the categories of gender and sexuality—visible in discourses and phantasies surrounding the notion of the bourgeois heterosexual family as "natural"—were at the core of British colonialism and nationalism in the nineteenth century, a view that also makes her contend that "[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous […] in the sense that they represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence" (p. 352). That is to say, notions and phantasies of gender appear as pivotal to the violent and racist workings of the modern nation-state.

In that sense, McClintock's work gives important insights into the intimate connections both between the European colonial project and the construction of European national boundaries, within the overarching framework of the expansion of industrial capitalism, and in terms of how gender and sexuality are at the core of the colonial-national enterprise. For this dissertation, these connections as exposed by McClintock are salient to the extent that they disclose how racial power dynamics internal to Europe are linked to global capitalist processes, which Europe is part of. While McClintock's exploration is limited to the British case and the colonisation of Africa in the nineteenth century, I believe her work is useful for a greater geopolitical analysis, beyond the limits of formal colonialism. Sweden too was a colonial power and participated in the transatlantic slave trade, although Swedish external colonialism was minor compared to that of the other European colonising states, due to what appears to be Sweden's longstanding semi-peripheral position in Europe (Wallerstein 2011). Instead, internal colonialism, i.e. the colonisation of Sápmi, became more important for the Swedish nation-state in

terms of exploitation of material and human resources (Naum and Nordin 2013). Nevertheless, as a Western European country, Sweden benefitted economically from the European colonial enterprise (Evans and Rydén 2013), and the ideology of European superiority vis-à-vis the colonised world was as present in Sweden as elsewhere in Western Europe (Fur 2013).

Moving the gaze from the historical construction of the European nation-state, the colonial enterprise and the construction of minoritised groups to notions of nationhood as a contemporary formation, I draw on feminist sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis to understand how the categories of gender and sexuality are at the core of asymmetrical power relations. In her book *Gender and Nation* (1997), Yuval-Davis argues that notions of nation and of national culture are highly gendered and sexualised, and that this corresponds to patriarchal interests of power:

> Hegemonic cultures present a specific view about the meaning of the world and the nature of social order. The relationships between women and men are crucial for such a perspective, and therefore in most societies also the control of women by men. (p. 67)

That is to say, ideas of masculinity and femininity, as well as of compulsory heterosexuality and non-normative sexualities, are embedded in discourses on national culture. For example, female bodies are often used to represent allegories of the nation, such as the case of "Mother Russia"—in Sweden the example would be "Mother Svea"—or feminine symbols of the French Republic, but also the notion of "Mother Earth". Women are therefore located as reproducers of (ethnic) cultural collectives, such as the nation, which in turn implies that women's bodies are monitored by men in a position of power to ensure that women's bodies are in line with what these men consider to be a proper representation of the collective. In that way, Yuval-Davis argues, notions of gender, but also of heterosexuality, become crucial in the creation of loyal members of the nation and in the creation of others as abjects (pp. 45-46).

The importance of gender and sexuality for the national self is even more emphasised in relation to individuals or groups outside the collective, according to Yuval-Davis. Also, patriarchal control and oppression of women tend to intensify when men of a cultural collective feel threatened by "others". In contemporary Europe, this "otherness" is often ascribed to migrants, "old" or "new" minorities, people from "another religion", and so on (pp. 46-47). Yuval-Davis writes:

> The embodiment dimension of the racialized "other" puts sexuality at the heart of the racialized imagery which projects dreams of forbidden pleasures and fears of impotency onto the "other". (p. 51)

Historically, Yuval-Davis argues, sexualisation of the racial "Other" has been visible in Western sexual phantasies about people in the colonies, and to a large extent about the Middle East as a particularly sexualised geographical area. Today, these sexual Western phantasies about the colonial "Other" continue to flourish not least as far as sexual tourism is concerned (pp. 51-53). Another example of this is anti-colonial theorist Franz Fanon's (1963) exploration of processes of colonisation and decolonisation in the Global South, and their effects on the psyche of both the coloniser and the colonised, and the dialectical relation between these. According to Fanon, the colonised (who always appears as a masculine subject in the French original text) is feminised by the coloniser, who takes control over his territory and forces him into a position of colonial submission. Therefore, to Fanon, the process of decolonisation implies a process in which the colonised is (re-)masculinised and thereby becomes an equal to the former coloniser.

In light of Yuval-Davis' argument, Fanon's text can be read as an exploration of how notions of gender and sexuality were active in the European colonial project, in the creation and enforcement of European nation-states as "masculine" political entities subduing "feminine" territories through conquest and forced colonisation, in the eyes of the European colonisers. However, Fanon's text could also be read critically, unmasking the romanticisation of masculinity that was embedded in the processes of decolonisation that followed World War II, a romanticisation from which Fanon didn't escape. Although McClintock criticises Fanon for his (heterosexual) male bias, and what she regards to be a Manichean approach to colonialism and decolonisation (McClintock 1995, 354), she still credits him for actually being an exception among "male theorists [who] have seldom felt moved to explore how nationalism is implicated in gender power" (p. 353).

In relation to gender in a Swedish context, feminist and antiracist scholars have shown how myths of "Swedish gender equality" inform images of Sweden, both nationally and internationally. Martinsson, Griffin and Giritli Nygren (2016) have argued that notions of "Swedish gender equality", or what can be labelled as forms of "Swedish gender exceptionalism", are characterised by nationalistic, modernist and racist ideas, among others. These discourses on gender equality are tightly connected to the Swedish state and nation, but also bear strong modernist assumptions of linear historical time, in which the Swedish nation-state is located at an advanced point in time compared to the

rest of the world, as far as equality between men and women is concerned. This in turn creates a hierarchy between an allegedly modern Sweden (and by extension Scandinavia and Europe) and a supposedly unmodern and hence non-gender-equal rest of the world. Moreover, discourses of Swedish gender equality are firmly entangled with structural inequalities between the categories of "Swedes" and "immigrants", since the latter in hegemonic discourses are seen as embodying patriarchy (De los Reyes, Molina, and Mulinari 2012). According to Ann Towns, the emergence of an alleged societal equality between "Swedish" men and women coincides in time with a harshening, at the discursive level, of racism against those categorised as "immigrants". In the early to mid-1990s, "immigrants" were increasingly portrayed as "gender-unequal", in contrast to representations of Sweden as a gender-equal nation. In that sense, notions of Swedish gender equality appear as discursively intertwined with a hierarchical categorisation of "Swedes" and "immigrants", to the detriment of the latter (Towns 2002).

Furthermore, in relation to nationhood and sexuality, scholars have shown how Sweden tends to be portrayed as an LGBTQ-friendly country, while discrimination and violence against LGBTQ people are understood as located on the outside of white Swedishness (Kehl 2020; Alm et al. 2021). In that way, racialised "Others", not least those categorised as "Muslims", are constructed as a threat to the lives and well-being of queer and trans people, implying that Sweden constitutes a safe haven for the latter. These homonationalistic notions (Puar 2007) of Sweden as an LGBTQ-friendly country can partly also be seen as playing into a larger Swedish nationalistic narrative, in which ideas of Sweden as an exceptionally modern country are interlinked with images of Sweden as sexually liberated, as visible in historical clichés about the "Swedish sin", but also in relation to public debates (and later legislative changes) around birth control and abortion that took place in the 1960s (Glover and Marklund 2009; Liinason 2017).

I suggest that Yuval-Davis' approach to gender, nationhood and racism is useful for an exploration of the (re)production of otherness in relation to the Swedish nation as an "imagined community", to racialisation of Jews in Sweden, and to the intersection of anti-Jewish racism, gender and sexuality. In other words, Yuval-Davis' argument concerning the interrelationality between race, nation, gender and sexuality becomes an analytical tool to bring together an exploration of racialisation of Jews in Sweden with global power structures. Both Yuval-Davis' argument about the nation as gendered, as well as McClintock's argument about the construction of non-national "Others" in opposition to the heterosexual, bourgeois male, suggest that processes of racialisation have a gendered dynamic. Following this line of argument, this

means that contemporary Swedish anti-Jewish racism also ought to have gendered aspects, and that these aspects play into a larger web of racial gendered relations. Moreover, the context of hegemonic notions of "Swedish gender equality" and the construction of racial "Others" as a threat against both women and LGBTQ people—Swedish versions of "femonationalism" (Farris 2017) and "homonationalism" (Puar 2007)—seems important for understanding contemporary anti-Jewish racism in relation to ideas of "Swedishness". Taking these theoretical contributions into consideration therefore opens up for an exploration of how aspects of gendering are part of the Swedish racial regime in general and for processes of racialisation of Jews in Sweden in particular.

## European racelessness

For the exploration of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, also to be taken into account is the contradictory position that the category of "race" holds in today's Europe, a contradiction that can be captured through the concept of "racelessness" used by several critical race scholars. For example, David Theo Goldberg (2001) has explored how the modern liberal state reproduces racism by portraying itself as raceless, thereby concealing its normatively white character. Here I am inspired by how queer and critical race scholar Fatima El-Tayeb (2011) uses the concept of "racelessness" to analyse some of the paradoxes of race and racism for the European self-understanding in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the decolonisation of (most of) Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. According to El-Tayeb, race is understood in hegemonic discourses to be completely irrelevant for the contemporary European political context, whereas it is understood to be relevant in other, non-European contexts, such as the United States. In that sense, from the end of World War II, questions of race and racial conflicts are thought to belong "elsewhere", outside Europe. Moreover, Europe itself is understood to be empty of race, in the sense that Europeanness equals a whiteness that sees itself as racially unmarked or neutral. In that way, only those categorised as non-European can embody the category of race. This implies that through migration from the Global South, i.e. migration from what used to be European overseas colonies, race is brought into Europe by migrants who are thought to embody the category of race, in contrast to those embodying an alleged European racelessness or racial neutrality (see also e.g. Kastoryano 2005).

However, while contemporary Europe invests in this portrayal of itself as intrinsically raceless and externalises race, El-Tayeb points out that, paradoxically, race is also intrinsic to the European self-image, in the sense

that the European genocide of European Jews is understood as an unavoidable point of reference for contemporary European history and identity (El-Tayeb 2011, 6). In that sense, the Holocaust constitutes a historical point of reference from which contemporary Europe actively and continuously distances itself. So, while race is externalised to Europe's outside, it is also embedded in Europe's past, but a past without which Europe cannot understand itself. It is noteworthy that race in the sense of a historical memory is important for Europe's self-perception only as far as the Holocaust is concerned, contrasting with a lack of acknowledgement of the role that the category had for European colonialism and the influence of this in forging today's Europe (Blanchard, Bancel, and Lemaire 2006).

While El-Tayeb mainly focuses on anti-Muslim racism in her book, I suggest her analysis of European "racelessness"—combined with notions of Sweden as non-nationalistic and progressive (Ruth 1984)—is highly relevant for understanding European racial discourses at large, not least as far as anti-Jewish racism is concerned. Following El-Tayeb, the rejection of anti-Jewish racism, or at least of the Holocaust, is foundational for contemporary Europe. Yet, from my perspective, this rejection also implies that Europe cannot acknowledge itself as being anti-Jewish in the present, since it thinks of itself as "raceless". Therefore, anti-Jewish racism is thought of as either belonging to the past, or it is projected onto its outside, i.e. the Middle East and/or bodies racialised as Middle Eastern. Within this paradigm, contemporary anti-Jewish racism as an expression of contemporary *Europeanness* becomes *unintelligible*, despite the European genocide of six million Jews. Only non-whites or people at the extremes of the political spectrum, which can be categorised as opponents to Europe as a liberal, modern and enlightened project, are understood as a potential embodiment of anti-Jewish racism within hegemonic discourses (Peace 2009). Simultaneously, it appears as if white, liberal, rational and modern Europe is not, and *cannot*, be perceived as racist against Jews within these discourses. In the Swedish case, this idea of anti-Jewish racism as existing "elsewhere" is likely to be strengthened by hegemonic notions of Sweden as a morally superior, modern and progressive nation, as captured in the concept of "Swedish exceptionalism". This in turn means that, at the discursive level, European anti-Jewish racism is both similar to and different from other forms of European racism. It is similar because it is not acknowledged to be part of today's Europe, but thought to belong elsewhere or in the past. Simultaneously, it is profoundly different because the rejection of anti-Jewish racism in particular is of such consequence for contemporary Europe, in a way that other racisms are not. Certainly, liberal Europe does not perceive itself to be anti-Black either, despite centuries of

enslavement and exploitation of Black bodies, but the rejection of anti-Jewish racism is foundational for post-1945 Europe in a way that is not comparable to the rejection of any other racism.

Inspired by El-Tayeb's notion of paradoxical European "racelessness", my argument is that Europe's unintelligibility of its own anti-Jewish racism makes it particularly tricky to address issues of anti-Jewish racism when this does not come from Europe's alleged "outside" or from the extremes of the political spectrum. I am not suggesting that other forms of European racism are easy to address either—I believe that El-Tayeb's argument, that European alleged "racelessness" makes this difficult in general, is correct—but the foundational rejection of anti-Jewish racism for contemporary Europe implies that a particular dynamic is at work when issues of anti-Jewish racism are raised. Moreover, I argue that the strong official European rejection of anti-Jewish racism, which is different from how Europe rejects other forms of racism, also implies a special relation between discourses on anti-Jewish racism and state power. It seems likely that the state-sanctioned rejection of anti-Jewish racism makes it harder to grasp the dynamics of power at work in contemporary European anti-Jewish racism, since they become somehow blurrier, less evident and therefore harder to grasp. Notions of "Swedish exceptionalism" are likely to contribute even further to the difficulty of conceptualising anti-Jewish racism as something coming from "inside" of Sweden, instead of reducing it to a phenomenon that is either external to "Swedishness" or at least very marginal.

# Truly belonging to the Swedish nation

## Real nationals and politics of belonging

Despite hegemonic discourses of European "racelessness", questions concerning the category of race appear as fundamental in contemporary debates in Europe. One theorist who has explored how notions of nationhood and race are interconnected in these debates is feminist and critical race scholar Nandita Sharma. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an "imagined community" (Benedict Anderson 2016), Sharma argues that the idea of a nation should be understood as a "racialised community", pointing out that the concept of nationhood is inseparable from that of race. Writing on the topic of citizenship, Sharma moreover argues that processes of nationalisation of societies and of states have been paramount for creating the categories of citizens, non-citizens and racialised co-citizens—the latter notion

denoting those with formal citizenship rights who are excluded from the national community on racial grounds—stating that "[r]acism, thus, is one of the key vectors determining the validity of anyone's claim to national belonging" (Sharma 2015, 99).

Furthermore, illustrating that the idea of the nation requires there always to be someone excluded from the national-racialised community, Sharma elaborates the following definition of racism as an ideology:

> Racism is an ideology which signifies certain biological or cultural characteristics as a criterion of group membership. These criteria are racialized: our noses, hair, eyes, lips, the amount of melatonin in our skin etc. as well as the languages we speak, the religions we do or do not adhere to, the foods we eat etc. are attributed to our purported belonging to a particular 'race'. Racism, like all ideologies, operates as a negative duality: through racism, our sense of self is established through the construction of an other who has characteristics said to be the opposite of 'ours' (we are White, they are Black etc.). These racialized ascriptions are read off of our bodies which themselves become a signifier for the purportedly separate biological characteristics associated with the idea of 'race'. (pp. 100-101)

Although racism in this quote is defined as an ideology, it should be noted that Sharma in her text carefully connects the development of this ideology to the creation of European nation-states, imperialism, the establishment of border controls, and control of labour power, i.e. the political and economic materiality that exists in permanent symbiosis with ideology. I also believe her emphasis here on the ideological aspects of racism is important, since she states that racism encompasses both racialisation of phenotypical traits (noses, hair, eyes, lips, skin colour), as well as racialisation of language, religious belonging and diet, all of these located in a dichotomous relationship between a national "us" and a non-national "them". In that sense, her understanding of racism as not restricted to merely phenotypical traits can be read alongside Balibar's claim that racism has always merged both biological and cultural aspects to its functioning, as exemplified by the theological racism against Jews and Muslims that was combined with notions of "purity of blood" during the Spanish *Reconquista*.

Moreover, Sharma argues that the ideology of racism, bound together with the nation-state as a "racialised community", has created the existence of "national minorities", i.e. citizens who are categorised as such on the grounds that they are racialised differently from the population "majority". While the latter are seen as the "real nationals", the "national minorities" are constituted as "foreign" or "others". In relation to her argument of "national minorities"

being created by the state, Sharma also makes the claim that in today's world there is a growing importance attributed to which categories of citizens are discursively located as truly belonging to the national racialised community. Sharma therefore regards contemporary society as being characterised by changes in the "discursive practices of racism" alongside "a hardening and narrowing of the idea of the 'national citizen'" (p. 113), and she uses the concept of "autochthony" to further elaborate on the processes of categorisation of who is and who is not included in the national racialised community. For Sharma, the concept of autochthony points to those who are considered as "real nationals" or "true natives" in opposition to those who are located on the outside of the nation.

> As claims to *nationhood* (to being people who are *a people*) continue to be the only legitimate (and legal) basis for organizing political communities, those who are able to constitute themselves as 'indigenous' (to being *a people* of *a place*) have been incorporated into contemporary nationalist discourses. Within movements centring *indigeneity*, being 'native' comes to be the only legitimate basis for claims to nationhood and, therefore, to state sovereignty. Such autochthonous claims define the 'nation' as that which 'belongs' to those with an 'original' occupation of any particular land and territory. Within autochthonous discourses, 'culture' (or 'ethnicity') becomes even more associated with 'blood' (or genealogy) once again, and 'native-ness' is posited as the only basis for the construction of a political community. In this way, the privileged subject of neo-racism is the autochthon. (pp. 113-14, emphasis in original)[14]

Hence, Sharma contends, in the contemporary world nationalist discourses increasingly emphasise the primacy of "place" and geographical origin for national racial belonging. To be included into the national racialised community, there is a growing need to be categorised as a "real native", as "indigenous" from the "soil" of the nation. In that sense, genealogy becomes more and more salient for racial classification, according to Sharma.

Moreover, while Sharma argues that historically there have been processes through which some categories of people, formerly categorised as "migrants" and "foreign", have become part of the national communities—she explicitly mentions the case of the Irish in the United States (Ignatiev 1995)—the ideology of "autochthony" and the importance of belonging to a "place" make

14 It should be noted that Sharma's use of the terms "indigenous" and "native" here differs from the way these concepts are used in the traditions of indigenous feminism and decolonial feminism (in a Swedish context, see e.g. Tlostanova, Suruchi, and Knobblock 2019). For Sharma, the notion of nativeness refers to expressions of power of the population majority vis-à-vis racial minorities.

such transformations more difficult. Sharma asserts that discourses centring "autochthony" or "native-ness" have grown in importance over the past years, thereby deepening the gaps between the categories of "citizens" or "real natives" on the one hand and "racialised co-citizens", "national minorities" or "foreign" on the other. Critically, this makes it "almost impossible" to shift one's status from "migrant" to "native" within this type of nationalist discourse (Sharma 2015, 114).

I find Sharma's conceptualisation of the nation as a "racialised community"—and thereby the intrinsic link between nationhood and racism—as useful for an exploration of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, not least in terms of the construction of Jews as a national minority in relation to the non-Jewish white majority population. In particular, I think her assertion that currently we are seeing a discursive shift in hegemonic discourses, where the notion of the autochthonous or the "truly national" gains in importance, is notable, and can also be seen in discussions concerning the "end of Swedish exceptionalism" (Schierup and Ålund 2011; Elgenius and Rydgren 2019). Inspired by Sharma, I therefore want to explore the "borderlands" (Anzaldúa 1999) of Sweden as a national racialised community, and how its boundaries sometimes appear as rigid, while at other times as porous. With this in mind, it becomes possible to explore in what contexts or to what degree Jews in Sweden are racialised as either co-citizens or "truly native", and how this in a complex way relates to other racialising discourses.

In relation to Sharma's conceptualisation of the nation as a "racialised community" building on a boundary-making between the racialised "Others" and the "autochthon" understood as the "truly native", I wish to go back to feminist sociologist Yuval-Davis' notion of "politics of belonging". According to Yuval-Davis (2011), there is a fundamental difference between "belonging" and "politics of belonging". While the former refers to a subjective experience of emotional bonds, attachments and a "feeling of home", "politics of belonging" on the other hand refer to enacted politics and discursive practices defining boundaries between different subjects, categorising them into those who do and do not belong to certain collectivities, often related to specific localities. In that sense, politics of belonging are closely tied to asymmetrical expressions of power. One illustration which Yuval-Davis deploys to demonstrate the difference between belonging as a subjective experience and politics of belonging is the historical example of Jews in Germany in the 1930s. While many Jews identified as German, and thus felt that they belonged to the German nation, the Nazis did not consider them to be German, and instead categorised them as outsiders (and enemies) to the German *Volk*, as not belonging. Thus, the subjective experience of belonging does not have to be

mirrored by official acknowledgement made by political entities. On the contrary, they can often come into conflict with one another (p. 10).

According to Yuval-Davis, politics of belonging are at the core of ideas about nationhood, defining boundaries between who is thought to belong to and who is categorised as an outsider of the nation. Thereby, politics of belonging are also a central issue for the state, which Yuval-Davis believes fosters ideas about nationhood in order to sustain its political legitimacy. Since these processes of boundary-making and the categorisations of the belonging and the not-belonging can take many different forms and shapes, Yuval-Davis remarks that the "crucial question is not the existence of the category [of the non-national] but how it is constructed and where its boundaries pass" (p. 91). In that sense, it is the exploration of how the categories of nationals and non-nationals are constructed and how the boundaries are enacted that becomes the relevant scholarly task for an exploration of the contemporary nation-state and its politics of belonging.

Highlighting how different states try to create ideological legitimacy through various mechanisms—sometimes through myths about a common origin, notions about a common culture, religion or language, and at other times through myths about a common destiny—Yuval-Davis also argues that national political discourses "can use certain ethnic and racial signifiers as a tool to justify its claim for the unification of certain people, territory and state" (p. 85). In that sense, "there is no inherent difference between ethnic, racial and national collectivities, they are all constructed around boundaries that divide the world between 'us' and 'them', usually around myths of a common origin and/or common destiny" (pp. 84-85), Yuval-Davis contends. While she argues also that there is a variety of "hegemonic political projects of belonging [which] represent different symbolic power orders" (p. 19), and that the maintenance of these different projects of belonging, as well as the contestation of them, exists in a continuous struggle for hegemony in their respective polities (p. 20), I understand that it is the convergence of nationhood, ethnicity and race which is one of the defining features of national projects of political belonging.

I suggest that the concept of "politics of belonging", and its differentiation from subjective experiences of belonging, constitutes a useful analytical tool to explore racism in Sweden, not least in light of Sweden being an example of a "homogenously constructed nation-state" (p. 86), where politics of belonging take on a different form than in settler colonial societies[15] with a larger ethnic-

15 Sweden can also be labelled a settler colonial society, due to its colonisation of Sápmi. Nevertheless, Yuval-Davis makes a differentiation between western European states and settler colonial societies in the (post-)colonial world outside Europe.

racial plurality, such as the United States or Brazil. Moreover, I find it particularly useful for the endeavour of exploring anti-Jewish racism within the Swedish racial regime, because it maintains an openness for how and through what mechanisms politics of belonging can be enacted—notably through origin, culture and religion. In that sense, while contemporary anti-Jewish racism cannot be understood in terms of exploitation of labour or natural resources, ideas about who "belongs" to the nation appear to be at the core of many different expressions and experiences of racism against Jews in Sweden over time.

## Sameness, universalism, secularism and Protestantism

In order to locate the questions about politics of belonging presented by Yuval-Davis, and the discursive racial changes favouring the category of the "autochthon" as presented by Sharma, in a Scandinavian context, I have found inspiration from Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002) and her concept of "imagined sameness". According to Gullestad, in all three Scandinavian countries—Norway, Denmark and Sweden—there is a widespread notion of "sameness" (*likhet*, in Norwegian and Swedish) as an intrinsically good societal value, not least in relation to the welfare state. Gullestad understands sameness to be a specifically Nordic expression of an "egalitarian individualism" that is argued to characterise the Global North, and which implies that "social actors must consider themselves to be more or less the same in order to feel of equal value" (p. 46). Moreover, and paradoxically so, it is through this imagined sameness that a social actor "also gains confirmation of their individual value", according to Gullestad (p. 47). As a consequence of the importance attributed to sameness for the relation between individuals and society, and thus for social cohesion at large, people who are perceived as "different" are likely to be seen as a societal threat in Scandinavia. This in turn leads to a strong social pressure to avoid recognition of difference as socially significant, as well as to avoid people being perceived as "too different", Gullestad asserts.

Although Gullestad locates her analysis of this "imagined sameness" in the context of anti-immigrant and, not least, anti-Muslim racism in Norway, I believe there are several aspects of her argument that are highly relevant for an analysis of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. Gullestad argues that sameness both operates through and reinforces notions of a national home, based on ideas of kinship and on a Lutheran morality. Central to this is a host-guest metaphor, in which "difference" as a negative social value is attached to the person coming from abroad with a non-Lutheran morality, who hence is perceived as a foreigner to Norwegian society. Although the host-guest

metaphor from my perspective probably operates somewhat differently in Sweden than in Norway due to the different historical trajectories of the two states,[16] the notion of the alleged "difference" of the "foreigner" as a societal threat is highly present within the Swedish racial regime as well (Kolankiewicz 2019; Aleksandra Ålund, Schierup, and Neergaard 2017). Thus, in a Swedish context, it is possible to understand that Sharma's notion of "the autochthon" and Yuval-Davis' "politics of belonging" partly operate through constructions of sameness versus difference, in which the "allochthon", or the not-belonging, is perceived as "different" from, and hence as a threat to, an imagined Swedish "sameness". In this context, displaying one's difference can therefore also be perceived as an act of threatening the social values of the nation. The host-guest metaphor attached to notions of a "national home" is also relevant to explore contemporary anti-Jewish racism and to what degree Jews are portrayed as being either from "elsewhere" or as part of this national home. These contributions therefore open up for exploring to what degree and in which contexts Jews are categorised either as "truly belonging" or "outsiders", and how the act of balancing between these two positions is experienced at the subjective level.

In relation to the notion of "sameness" in a Swedish context, I wish to return to Étienne Balibar and his discussion on the role of universalism for racism as an ideology. At first sight, universalism can appear as the opposite of racism. If racism consists in categorising people into groups based on particularistic notions of "race" (which can be based on phenotypical traits, "blood", culture, religion…), universalism is commonly understood as the notion that there is something that unites all human beings, regardless of social categorisations, time and space. Following this understanding of racism, it appears that racial nationalisms are cases of particularistic expressions of the notion that there would be something specifically "Swedish", "French" or "Brazilian". However, Balibar argues that not only particularistic ideas but also universalistic notions are present in racist and nationalist discourses. For example, one can observe that the notion of "humanism", stemming back to the Renaissance movement, was a universalistic discourse that was closely attached to notions of Europe in contrast to the Ottoman Empire and the world that Europe was beginning to colonise (Bernal 1991). The universalistic claims of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, emerging out of the struggle of the Third Estate against the privileges of the French nobility, demonstrated their racially limited reach when they were

16 Here I am thinking mainly of the German occupation of Norway during World War II—but also of Norway's forced union with Sweden (1814-1905)—which are likely to add another nuance to notions of migrants as "invaders" than similar discourses do in a Swedish context.

picked up by the Haitian revolutionaries fighting slavery and white supremacy, and who were met by Napoleon's army (James 1963). Likewise, numerous scholarly works have shown how contemporary US and European military interventions in the Global South—under the banner of an alleged defence of universal human rights—correspond to particular imperialist interests (Chomsky 2011; Ali 2003).

Analysing the simultaneity of particularism and universalism in French national discourses, Balibar claims:

> There is, no doubt, a French branch of the doctrines of Aryanism, anthropometry and biological geneticism, but the true 'French ideology' is not to be found in these: it lies rather in the idea that the culture of 'the land of Rights of Man' has been entrusted with a universal mission to educate the human race. There corresponds to this mission a practice of assimilating dominated populations and a consequent need to differentiate or rank individuals or groups in terms of their greater or lesser aptitude for – or resistance to – assimilation. (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 24)

According to Balibar, what is portrayed as particularly French is, paradoxically, what is considered to be extraordinarily universalistic and therefore bears a special relation to the rest of the world. For Balibar, the racist features of French nationalism are therefore not primarily about the specificities of explicit state-driven racist policies ("doctrines of Aryanism, anthropometry and biological geneticism") but rather the relation between a certain idea of France and those who are categorised as non-French, a relation that is ordered hierarchically, and expressed through a universalistic discourse. Balibar here uses "assimilation" as an analytical concept to understand the relation between French nationalist discourses and those categorised as non-French. According to Balibar, it is only through one's capacity to "assimilate" to the alleged universal character of "the French" that one is understood as an emancipated, and thereby full, human being. However, Balibar observes that the requirement to "assimilate" is unevenly distributed:

> No theoretical discourse on the dignity of all cultures will really compensate for the fact that, for a 'Black' in Britain or a '*Beur*' in France, the assimilation demanded by them before they can become 'integrated' into the society in which they already live (and which will always be suspected of being superficial, imperfect or simulated) is presented as progress, as an emancipation, a conceding of rights. And behind this situation lie barely reworked variants of the idea that the historical cultures of humanity can be divided into two main groups, the one assumed to be universalistic and progressive, the other supposed irremediably particularistic and primitive. (p. 25)

In this unmasking of French nationalism, it becomes clear that some particular cultures are considered to be universalistic, whereas others are considered to be particularistic and therefore "primitive" and in need of civilisation. Therefore, a "Black" or an "Arab" is considered in need of assimilation into the French, allegedly universalistic and progressive, national culture. Behind this logic there is an implicit racial categorisation, Balibar contends, of some people as progressive and others as primitive. Discourses of "assimilation" therefore both reveal this racial character of European nationalism and sustain it through its repetitious character. Whoever is considered to be in need of assimilation is not only labelled as an outsider to the nation, but is also considered to be racially inferior.

Although Balibar writes specifically about France and French nationalism, it should be clear that his argument is not limited to the French case. Quite eloquently, Balibar writes:

> Each White nation is spiritually 'the whitest': in other words, it is both the most elitist and the most universalistic. (p. 43)

That is to say, Balibar argues that the tension between particularism and universalism that is present in French nationalism is likewise present in the national discourses of other "white" nation-states. As I interpret Balibar, "white" here refers to a sense of a common European or Western superiority vis-à-vis the rest of the world, particularly the former colonies. Moreover, Balibar contends there is an ongoing competition between these "white" nations to be the most universalistic. In a Swedish context, it seems like "Swedish exceptionalism" and its portrayal of Sweden as a morally superior, ultra-modern, progressive and non-nationalistic nation constitutes the Swedish equivalent of a French ideology that emphasises France as the country of "Rights of Man". At the same time, Gullestad's notion of Scandinavian "sameness", including its Protestant connotations, appears as highly relevant in relation to the social pressure to become "assimilated" in Swedish society and for defining the boundaries of "Swedishness". In that sense, therefore, I regard Balibar's understanding of the tension between universalism and particularism in European nationalisms to be highly relevant for an analysis of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. In this endeavour it will be necessary to explore the consequences of "Swedish exceptionalism" for processes of racialisation of Jews, and how this is experienced at the subjective level.

Another way to explore universalistic claims as part of the Swedish racial regime, inspired by both El-Tayeb's argument of the centrality of the religious-secular divide to understand contemporary European racisms and Gullestad's

notion of the Protestant character of Scandinavian "sameness", is to engage in how notions of "Swedishness" relate to secularism and Christianity, and what this implies for contemporary anti-Jewish racism. In order to explore the importance of universalism in relation to religion, but also of secularism, for racism and politics of belonging, I turn to the book ¨*Is Critique Secular?* (Asad et al. 2013) for a theorisation of the relation between secularism and European racism. Therein, Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Sarah Mahmood discuss the reactions that unfolded, both in the Muslim world and in the Global North, in the wake of publication of the so-called Mohammed cartoons in the Danish daily newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005. The authors discuss how the event and the subsequent reactions can inform us about racism, secularism, universalism, notions of freedom, and modernity. Although the authors approach these themes from different theoretical, epistemic, disciplinary and political angles, in the preface Brown, Butler and Mahmood outline their common understanding of how the Mohammed cartoons can inform us about these matters.

One central argument made by the authors is that secularism itself is highly contradictory. On the one hand, secularism is presented as an alleged neutrality of the state in religious matters, including the state's equal treatment of all religions, and this constitutes one of the cornerstones of Western modernity's universalistic ideology. However, the authors argue that this secular worldview in itself is by no means neutral or universal but has evolved out of a particular cultural frame, notably that of Western European Christianity, and especially from Protestantism:

> Given the post-Reformation European origins of modern law, politics, and the nation-state, this religious content is, unsurprisingly, often Protestant in character and carries related sensibilities and values. Key among these values is the idea that religion is a matter of subjective and interior belief, whose proper locus is the individual conscience rather than religion's phenomenal forms (rites, liturgies, scripture). Such a conception comports closely with (and helps to generate) the liberal idea of free will and individual autonomy. It is bound up with the modern judgment that religion, to be squared with freedom and enlightenment, must be freely chosen by a rational and deliberate agent, culled from a variety of equally valid options. […] In other words, the embodied forms are assigned secondary status, while beliefs are made primary. Such a conception of religion is naturalized in secular societies to such an extent that its presuppositions and requirements go unnoticed until they collide with other competing conceptions of religion, which are then often dismissed as backward, fundamentalist, insincere, or simply traditional. (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013, x-xi)

This implies that secularism, although presented to us as a universalistic ideology guaranteeing individuals freedom from religious oppression and equal treatment of all religions on behalf of the state, is indeed rooted in a particularistic cultural frame, namely that of Protestant Christianity. This cultural frame emphasises the distinction between the realm of the private—in which individual conscience is located—and the realm of the public, in which the political and the non-religious are located. Moreover, as stated by the authors in the quote above, the Protestant cultural background of this worldview also implies an understanding of religion as something that has to do with a belief system ("interior"), rather than culturally embodied practices or phenomenal forms ("rites, liturgies, scripture").

Another argument made in the preface to *Is Critique Secular?* is that secularism, as an ideology stemming from a particularistic (Protestant) cultural frame, has shaped the entire Western modern understanding of the very category of religion. Although this secular understanding is just one particular out of many possible understandings of what religion/faith/spirituality is or might be, this is presented as a truly universalistic approach to religion as a social phenomenon.

> Secularism is conventionally taken merely to limit the provenance and reach of religion, to sequester it in the private sphere, rather than to define, transform, or generate the meaning and structure of religion. Secularism, in other words, is conventionally viewed as an organizational structure for what are taken to be a priori elements of human life – public, private, political, religious – rather than a discursive operation of power that generates these very spheres (and not only their boundaries) and suffuses them with content. Moreover, the conventional formulation of secularism is strongly normative: it holds out an entelechy of becoming that all states and societies are expected (or urged to commandeer) to judiciously follow, key among them societies that are understood to be stuck in a culture of unreason and belief, fealty, orthodoxy, and religious authority. It is at this point that the normative dimensions of secularism converge with the claim of Western civilizational superiority, mutually generating and fortifying each other. (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013, ix)

That is to say, the boundaries between the religious and the secular, and indeed the notion that there are such separate and pre-given spheres, are in themselves secular inventions. This means that outside a secular worldview, or maybe even outside a worldview that does not stem from Protestant Christianity, the division between the religious and the secular does not necessarily make any sense in social interactions, according to the authors.

Although Asad et al. are not the only ones who have argued for the connection between Protestantism and secularism (see e.g. McCrary and Wheatley 2017 for an overview of this in a US academic context), the argument made by the authors that secularism is rooted in a Protestant cultural tradition is important for the dissertation in the sense that it unveils the alleged universalism of Western secularism, and understands secularism as a particularistic discursive practice. Although the authors analyse secularism primarily in relation to Islam as a "discursive formation", I suggest that their contribution is useful to analyse what happens when state secularism meets with Judaism, if we understand Judaism as a particular "discursive formation" (albeit with huge internal diversity, just like Islam), which, despite being deeply rooted in European culture (among others), nevertheless is defined—theologically and epistemically—as not part of the Protestant culture in which secularism emerged.[17] More precisely, it is relevant for us to explore representations and experiences of Jewishness in Sweden, a modern secular nation-state which for a long time has been characterised by a Protestant culture, and in which freedom of faith wasn't granted until the 1950s.[18] In light of the discussion above, it becomes germane to explore how this intersection is handled in cases where the ideology of secularism possibly collides with non-Protestant understandings of what religion is or might be, such as in the cases of Jewish ritual male circumcision or kosher food. In that sense, the argument that secularism and Protestantism are entangled becomes an analytical tool to explore the entanglements of race and religion in the case of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden.

17 Important to clarify is that I am not making the argument that one cannot be Jewish and secular at the same time. The argument made by Butler, Brown and Mahmood, which I believe is relevant here, is rather that non-Protestant religious and cultural practices will often find themselves to be in opposition to secular notions in a way that Protestant religious and cultural practices will not, due to the Protestant cultural background of secularism. Therefore, Protestantism will always be less of a "problem" for secular society than other religious traditions.

18 Religious freedom was granted in Sweden in 1952 (Carlsson 2021). Before this date a Swedish citizen could not leave the Church of Sweden unless they became a member of another religious congregation. It was not until 2000 that the church was separated from the state, and important political and economic ties still remain between the Swedish state and the Church of Sweden. Moreover, according to the Swedish constitution, the Swedish head of state and their family (the royal family) must be of Protestant faith.

# Final reflections: towards an exploration of the Swedish racial regime

In this chapter, I have discussed the work of various feminist and critical race scholars to construct a theoretical framework that is relevant for exploring anti-Jewish racism within the Swedish racial regime. Building on the work of these scholars, I have argued that contemporary anti-Jewish racism should be understood as a modern phenomenon which is part of a larger web of racial relations characterising Swedish society. These racial relations are in turn a product of historical capitalist expansion, European colonialism and the construction of the modern state. Moreover, I have argued for the fruitfulness of analysing contemporary anti-Jewish racism in relation to constructions of nationhood, from the perspective that nationalist and racist discourses are tightly tied together, including colonial relations between the Global North and the Global South. This means that the construction of Jews as national minorities vis-à-vis white non-Jewish majority populations is part of a larger pattern of constructions of minoritised groups, which in turn are central for the reproduction of the nation-state in Europe. I have discussed how questions of gender and sexuality are of pivotal importance in nationalist-racist discourses, and that notions of femininity and masculinity are part of racialisation both of minoritised groups and white majority populations. I have also shown that the notion of Europe's alleged "racelessness" after the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 has particular consequences for the racialisation of Jews in Europe, rendering anti-Jewish racism unintelligible as an intrinsic part of liberal Europe.

Notions of Sweden as an exceptionally moral, modern, progressive and "non-nationalistic" country, or what has been called "Swedish exceptionalism", was identified as a hegemonic form of nationalism that informs the Swedish racial regime and politics of belonging to "Swedishness". In relation to gender and sexuality, this "Swedish exceptionalism" also takes on traits of femonationalism (Farris 2017) and homonationalism (Puar 2007), constructing Sweden in opposition to racialised "Others", who are categorised as a threat to women and to LGBTQ people. Central for "Swedishness" is also the notion of "sameness" and the issue of not appearing "different", mirroring a Swedish/Scandinavian version of a hegemonising logic of the European nation-states, in which a Protestant-secular tradition appears as particularly important. I regard these features as core for the Swedish racial regime and for the conceptualisation of Sweden as a "racialised community".

Taken together, this theoretical framework thus constitutes a path to approach anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime in a way that centres

both the modern state and constructions of "Swedishness", while taking into account Sweden's geopolitical position in the Global North. In doing so, it pays special attention to the religious-secular divide in relation to racist discourses, as well as the reproduction of anti-Jewish racism within a context of multiple Swedish racisms, informed by notions of gender and sexuality. Also, connecting the discussion about nationhood and racism to notions of European universality and the category of religion for the creation of the "Other" as particularistic, it becomes fruitful to explore what implications the boundaries of "Swedishness", related to notions of progressiveness and modernity, have for processes of racialisation of the category of Jews.

# Chapter 4: Methodological framework

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological paths that I have followed in the process of exploring anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime. Locating the research project within a feminist methodological tradition, and inspired not least by standpoint theory (Patricia Hill Collins 2000), the research has also been informed by Michael Burawoy's "Extended Case Method" (Burawoy 1998). The dissertation's combination of various forms of empirical material—in-depth interviews, discourse analysis and film analysis—paving the way for an analytical focus at the crossroads of experiences and discourses, constitutes a methodological frame that contributes to previous studies of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish context. While previous qualitative studies exploring experiences of anti-Jewish racism have only rarely taken into account the variety of racialising discourses permeating Swedish society, the ambition of this thesis is to analyse anti-Jewish racism within the social frames of the Swedish racial regime. Therefore, it becomes fruitful to analyse these experiences by connecting them to Swedish racialising discourses. Indebted to both the feminist methodological tradition and the Extended Case Method, I begin the chapter by analysing topics of location and positionality (Haraway 1988) that have been important in the research process. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss the specific methods I have applied in the research process, and I connect them to the overall methodological framework.

## Knowledge: embedded and from below

Within the tradition of feminist methodology (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002; Fonow and Cook 1991; Nielsen 2019; Davis and Craven 2016), there have been extensive discussions about how knowledge is produced in academia, and the implications of this for the relationality between the

researcher, the research field and the empirical material which the researcher collects and studies. Feminist philosopher Donna Haraway (1988) argues against positivistic notions of the researcher as an objective and detached observer who approaches the object of study without any subjective preconceptions which could limit the scholarly analysis. According to Haraway, such an understanding of the researcher is illusionary, since it mirrors a notion of the researcher as capable of approaching the research field and observing an object from a neutral position from "above", free of external influences or subjective bonds. Against this so-called "God trick" of positivistic epistemology, Haraway argues for an acknowledgement that knowledge is always situated in time and space, and in the researcher's own embodiment and relationality to the research field and the object of study. Her understanding of knowledge thus implies that the researcher is always part of the knowledge that is produced. In that sense, all knowledge, both inside and outside academia, is always "situated", in Haraway's terminology. To the extent that the researcher acknowledges themselves to be an embodied and situated part of the research, this can result in what feminist theorist Sandra Harding (1986) has called a "stronger objectivity". This "stronger objectivity" challenges notions of the researcher as neutral and disembodied, but still argues that a certain degree of objectivity is possible, in the sense that reflexive acknowledgement of the researcher's own subjective limitations—which according to Harding are always there even when they aren't accounted for—makes it easier for both the researcher and the reader to contextualise, problematise and discuss research results.

In relation to understandings of knowledge as created and produced in various places in society, feminist methodological debates have also resulted in important insights regarding knowledge production outside academia, but from which researchers can learn. Various strands of feminism, such as Black feminism (hooks 1990; Essed 1991; Lorde 1984), Chicana feminism (Anzaldúa 1999), postcolonial feminism (C. T. Mohanty 1984; Narayan 2004) and Marxist feminism (Hennessy 2000; Hartmann 1995) have provided relevant analysis of collective forms of knowledge production that evolve through collective struggles aiming to challenge oppression and marginality. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000), located within the tradition of Black feminism, argues that there are specific forms of shared, dialogical and collective knowledge in the lived experiences of Black women, subjected to both sexism and racism, in the US context. Although Hill Collins is careful to point out the internal differences among US Black women, especially as far as class positions and sexual identities are concerned, she nevertheless highlights the commonalities among Black women in the US as a category, due to their

experiences of racist and sexist oppression. According to Hill Collins, the knowledge about society that is embedded in this social position is something that categories of more privileged groups lack, simply because they don't share the same experiences of oppression. Along similar lines, sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005), located within a Marxist-feminist tradition, has underlined the importance of lived experiences for the analysis of social relations, arguing that experiences of class oppression and patriarchy result in particular forms of knowledge about the world. According to Smith, scholars must therefore move the gaze from individual experiences of oppression and marginalisation to a focus on the social processes and power relations that shape the experiences and conditions of research participants. By doing this, it becomes possible for the researcher to analyse how individual experiences at the micro-level relate to social structures and power relations at the meso- and macro-levels in society (Mery Karlsson 2020; Selberg 2012).

In relation to the acknowledgement that there are specific forms of knowledge in positions of oppression and marginality, feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (1986) and Sandra Harding (2004, 1991) have used the concept of "standpoint theory" to further explore the epistemic privilege of the oppressed. What could be interpreted as indebted to a long epistemic tradition tracing back to Hegel ([1807] 1977), Marx ([1844] 1977), and Lukács ([1923] 1971), who in various ways maintained that there is knowledge about the world embedded in subordinated power positions, standpoint theory emphasises the importance of exploring subjectivities and subject positions of people facing oppression and marginalisation. To learn from the "standpoint", or the subordinated subjectivities, of a certain group thus implies a potential to gain insights into the knowledge about the world that this group shares. Standpoint epistemologies therefore identify the knowledge embodied at the margins, a knowledge that is often excluded from mainstream academia. From a standpoint theoretical perspective, researchers could therefore learn about the workings of power from subjectivities among marginalised groups.

Against critiques that standpoint theory implies an essentialist notion of the "Other" (see e.g. the discussion in Hekman 1997), lumping people in a subordinated position into a homogenous group, I understand standpoint theory to constitute a valuable analytical gaze on relations of knowledge production, not least as far as racism is concerned. Moving the analysis from individual accounts to collective experiences (and the collective struggles for social justice), the knowledge embedded in the lived experiences of the people that I have interviewed—and who have contributed decisively to this dissertation—expands the understanding of the Swedish racial regime. In contrast to the critique that a focus on experiences as a form of knowledge limits explorations

of how these experiences are constructed and how subjects are constituted (Scott 1991), I will bridge the "lived worlds" of the interviewees with the social relations in which these take place (D. Mulinari and Sandell 1999), by combining the in-depth interviews with Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as film analysis. In that sense, the focus on experiences does not imply a monolithic or essentialising understanding of positions of marginality, but rather to acknowledge that, in my case, there are specific forms of knowledge about racism in Sweden among the category of Jews living in Sweden. Together with an analysis of racialising discourses permeating Swedish society, these experiences therefore expand our knowledge about anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime. In dialogue with the interviewees, and learning from their experiences, I therefore think an analysis of the lived experiences of people identifying as Jews in Sweden has a potential to make visible certain aspects of the Swedish racial regime, while acknowledging the complexities, ambivalences and nuances that anti-Jewish racism entails.

## The Extended Case Method

In addition to the tradition of standpoint theory, Marxist sociologist Michael Burawoy's (1998) Extended Case Method has also played a crucial part in the methodological framing of the dissertation, due to its emphasis on reflexive research for expanding academic knowledge. A term originally coined by the Manchester school of social anthropology, Burawoy's engagement with the Extended Case Method in a tradition of critical theory, as well as his elaboration and theorisation of it, provides a methodological frame for reflecting on the methods I have used to gather the empirical material, but also the relationship between the material, the theoretical framework of the dissertation, and myself as a researcher. Although Burawoy does not explicitly inscribe himself in a feminist tradition, there are similarities between Burawoy's methodological contribution and the feminist epistemic tenets that were discussed in the section above, notably the emphasis on the researcher's embeddedness in the social world, and the critique of positivistic notions of the researcher as a neutral observer.

According to Burawoy, contemporary social sciences are based on two different scientific approaches: one positivist, and one reflexive. Positivist research is centred upon notions such as reliability, validity and replicability, and aims to detach the researcher from the object of study in order to gain as neutral information as possible about the object of study. From this perspective,

measures must be taken to ensure that there are as few "disturbances" as possible in the process of gathering information, such as personal biases of the researcher, possible misinterpretations, various contexts influencing those studied in a way that the research design cannot control, etc. Reflexive research, on the other hand, regards those "disturbances" as part of the social reality it aims to study, and therefore makes a point of incorporating them into the analysis of the material. Reflexive research can therefore never be "replicated" in a way that positivist research hypothetically could, but instead aims at gathering new insights into the social by expanding what already has been studied. The preoccupation of reflexive research is therefore not to uncover the "truth" about society, but rather to contribute to a continuous theoretical elaboration of social processes, according to Burawoy (1998, 28).

In relation to this line of argument, *extension* is central for Burawoy's notion of reflexive research. While positivistic science aims at creating generalities directly from what they conceptualise as the empirical material, reflexive science aims rather at creating more inclusive generalities about the social through the capacity to move between different generalities, Burawoy argues (p. 16). In that way, reflexive research also contributes to extending our existing theoretical knowledge about the social world. Furthermore, the desire to elaborate on theory in order to contribute to more inclusive generalities implies that the purpose of the Extended Case Method is not to reduce empirical cases to a general law, but rather to connect "cases", i.e. forms of empirical material, to other cases. This means paying attention to the nuances and differences in the empirical material, and to "trace the source of small differences to external forces" (p. 19), i.e. the wider social processes in which social phenomena occur. In other words, Burawoy's notion of "extension" is used here in two ways: to connect different forms of empirical material to one another, but also to extend the empirical material as a whole to social theories. By doing this, the thesis aims at deepening our understanding of various features of anti-Jewish racism as well as how it can be interpreted as part of the larger social reality of the Swedish racial regime.

Inspired by Burawoy's notion of the Extended Case Method and the tradition of standpoint theory with feminist methodology, the thesis partly engages with Jewish subjectivities within the wider realm of race relations in Sweden. The part of the dissertation that analyses these interviews thereby constitutes a methodological contribution to the field of racism studies in Sweden, building upon previous interview studies within the field of studies on antisemitism by scholars such as Thor Tureby and Dahl (2009), Krantz (2018), Nylund Skog (2006, 2012, 2014) and Grobgeld and Bursell (2021). The interviews are given an important place in the dissertation, because I believe these subjective stories

can inform us about the wider complex web of racial dynamics in Sweden, in particular the interrelationality between the informants' Jewish identity, constructions of "Swedishness", and other racial categories. In that sense, the experiences of the interviewees, which often appear as quotes in the text, play a pivotal role in the empirical body of the thesis as they shed light on, discuss and problematise race relations in Sweden, but are also located in relation to the discourse and film analyses in the preceding chapters.

When conducting interviews, I noticed how in some cases my focus on anti-Jewish racism as part of the larger web of racism in Sweden created friction with the interviewees. Sometimes I got the impression that a few of them had expected other sorts of questions from my part. Although I had previously informed them that I was interested in both antisemitism and Jewish identity, on some occasions the interviewee understood the concept of "identity" in another way than I did. While some of them regarded this concept as more related to cultural practices, rituals, relationship to Jewish congregations etc., I focused my questions more on self-perceptions, the relation between ethnic and national identities, family history and so on. In a few cases, when at the end of an interview I asked if there was something they would like to add, some interviewees expressed disappointment that I hadn't asked more direct questions related to their understandings of "identity", which might indicate that they had wanted to share with me their reflections on Swedish-Jewish culture and how they relate to Swedish-Jewish cultural practices.

One possible way to interpret this is that my interest in racism has implied a negative focus on what it means to embody an identity different from the white Swedish norm. Had I instead focused the interviews on notions of Jewish cultural-religious practices or internal community relations, as done by Anna Sarri Krantz (2018) in her doctoral dissertation, it would have been possible for the interviewees to express their positive experiences and feelings concerning what being Jewish in today's Sweden means. However, this thesis does not engage with the Jewish community per se, the negotiated boundaries of the community, the reproduction of the community, community institutions or institutional practices. Instead, the focus lies on individual experiences of anti-Jewish racism and how this relates to racist structures in Swedish society. In that sense, the thesis does not do justice to the actual lives of the interviewees. It does not intend to capture the totality of what it means to be Jewish in today's Sweden, but rather focuses on forms and expressions of racism against Jews in Sweden. Inspired by Burawoy, I perceive my choice of research focus and empirical material as a means to expand research to analyse anti-Jewish racism in the wider context of Swedish racisms, and thereby to fill a gap in existing scholarship.

## The centrality of theory for reflexive research

Another feature of Burawoy's approach to the Extended Case Method that has been central to this thesis is the pivotal role that the theoretical frames play in it. For Burawoy, the theoretical aspect is essential for all kinds of reflexive research, and something that differentiates it from positivist science. Theoretical traditions are vital, because they are needed to insert the situational knowledge of the empirical material into a wider understanding of social relations and social processes, and to analyse these within wider transnational contexts. That is to say, without theoretically informed gazes on the world, it is not possible to analyse data at all, from Burawoy's perspective (Burawoy 1998, 21).

In that sense, the importance of theory for reflexive research also points at the inherent epistemological and practical problems with positivist science, since this builds on claims of impartiality and objectivity vis-à-vis the empirical material. Similar to many feminist contributions, Burawoy asserts that from a reflexive research perspective all science is already embedded in social processes, which in turn makes such an impartiality impossible. While Burawoy, inscribing himself in a Marxist tradition, is careful to point out that the embeddedness of science in the social does not mean that science could be reduced to just a matter of relativism (p. 13), he suggests instead a kind of "embedded objectivity", paving way for "a model of science that takes context as a point of departure" (p. 7). In that sense, he favours an embedded objectivity "dwelling in theory" (p. 28), with the understanding that all theory constitutes an intervention in the world it wishes to understand. In that sense, the goal of reflexive research would not be to find the ultimate "truth" about the social world, but rather to continuously and gradually improve existing social theories. Burawoy's understanding of the relationality between researcher and object of study thereby resembles Sandra Harding's (1986) notion of an "expanded objectivity" and Donna Haraway's (1988) concept of "situated knowledge", which we saw at the beginning of this chapter.

Another salient remark made by Burawoy in relation to the importance of theory for reflexive research is that often it is not the research problem that determines the method deployed, but the other way around: the methods which scholars use shape the research problem they can provide an answer to (Burawoy 1998, 30). In relation to research on antisemitism, I think this is a noteworthy point. While quantitative research is indeed requisite and valuable to measure violence and hatred against vulnerable groups (see e.g. Bachner and Bevelander 2021), the focus of this dissertation, however, is not to measure anti-Jewish racism. Using qualitative data, my purpose is not to determine "how much" anti-Jewish racism there is in Sweden, or among what social groups it is stronger or

weaker, but rather to explore how anti-Jewish racism is experienced and how it is expressed in certain contexts. By deploying qualitative research methods, it thus becomes possible to ask *other questions* about anti-Jewish racism than those posed by quantitative research approaches.

In practice, the theoretical focus of the thesis on questions related to nationhood, racism, gender, secularism and Protestantism—discussed in Chapter 3—has shaped the way I analyse the material. At the same time, the themes and patterns that I found in the empirical material partly led to my theoretical interest in these topics. In that sense, the theoretical framework and the empirical material have influenced each other mutually over the course of the research project. When I first started the project, my theoretical gaze on the world influenced what material I chose to collect and what I saw in the material, but the material also spoke back to me and guided me to new theoretical concepts that I then found relevant for the structure and analysis of the material.

## Interrelationality in the field

One salient feature of Burawoy's Extended Case Method, which has been important for the elaboration of the thesis, is the interrelationality between the researcher and research participants. For Burawoy, the potential for an embedded form of objectivity through reflexive science requires a form of "communicative action" (Burawoy 1998, 28) in order to manage the power dynamic that is inherent in the unequal relationship between the researcher and the people studied by the researcher. According to Burawoy, this power dynamic is at the core of reflexive research and should therefore always be analysed carefully as part of the research process. While positivist science strives to eliminate any form of "disturbances" that could endanger the impartiality of the researcher vis-à-vis the object of study, what reflexive research does is instead to explore, discuss and analyse those disturbances. For example, this could concern certain things in an interview situation that are left unsaid, forms of tacit knowledge, or the researcher's own relationship to the object of study. Moreover, this calls for an acknowledgement of the fact that what is at play in reflexive science is a form of intersubjectivity, in which both the researcher and those studied are subjects with their own worldviews. Furthermore, intersubjectivity does not exist in a vacuum, but rather in a context of domination, in which the researcher holds the power to write and analyse their own subjective impressions, while at the same time they are also dependent on the will of the people studied, and power hierarchies among these, in order to gain access to research input (p. 22). Thus, for Burawoy, forms of domination are not something that can be avoided in reflexive

research, but rather something that should be explored and analysed as part of the research process.

Inspired both by Burawoy and by interventions within feminist methodology, such as Haraway's (1988) discussion of knowledge as always limited and situated, I have reflected on how my own social embeddedness has affected my entry point to the field and how this has guided the process of conducting research. One factor is my personal identification with the Global Left, and the fact that since my early teens I have been actively involved in several social movements harbouring what Nancy Fraser (2008) has labelled a social justice agenda. From this experience, I have reflected on three aspects of my trajectory into research on anti-Jewish racism, gleaned from the milieus that I have frequented and witnessed. These aspects have partially guided my entry point into doing research on anti-Jewish racism in Sweden.

The first aspect is the relation between the Global Left's opposition to racism and its opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. While the Left historically has played a very important role in fighting racism, including anti-Jewish racism—not least as expressed in the form of Hitler's fascism—the fact that so much of the public debate about antisemitism relates to Israel-Palestine has sometimes made it difficult for the Left to articulate its own analysis of contemporary anti-Jewish racism and how to fight it. This is particularly the case at a political conjuncture where the Left has had to distance itself from conflations of antisemitism with a critique of the Israeli occupation of Palestine (Yuval-Davis 2020; Butler 2014).

Within the broader context of what sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein has labelled "antisystemic movements" (Wallerstein 2006), there is a second aspect which has informed my trajectory into research on contemporary anti-Jewish racism as a social phenomenon, namely the tension within the antiracist movement concerning the struggle against antisemitism. This aspect relates to the Left's solidarity with Palestine, but is also somewhat different, because of the worry among antiracist circles that discussions about antisemitism could be used in a way that would harshen anti-Muslim racism, since Muslims in the public debate are often accused of being antisemitic, not least as a consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, from an antiracist perspective this can also be seen as due to issues related to racial hierarchies, and how Jews are being positioned in relation to people of colour and people racialised as white, respectively. The question of whether or not "Jews are white" (Gilman 1999) can partly be seen in relation to a US racial context dominated by a Black-white "colour line" (Du Bois 1990), but also to the European racial context dominated by a harsh rhetoric and policies against non-European migrants, particularly Muslims and Middle Easterners. In that context, some antiracists

have found it difficult to conceptualise and understand anti-Jewish racism as part of persisting European racial structures (see Bouteldja 2017 as an example of this), thereby displaying a difficulty in fighting various and sometimes very different forms of racism. This difficulty in conceptualising anti-Jewish racism as part of contemporary European racism thus reinforces the notion that, after World War II, European anti-Jewish racism is only expressed at the margins of society. From my perspective, this is a very troublesome idea, since it makes it possible for today's Europe to distance itself from the fact that Europe, which murdered six million Jews in the 1940s, has a many-centuries-long history of anti-Jewish pogroms, and that racist structures—anti-Jewish racism among them—were pivotal in the construction of the European nation-states, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The third aspect that has played into my own understanding of anti-Jewish racism before starting this research project has been the fact that I noticed that several of my friends and acquaintances with a Jewish background and a leftist worldview (in a broad sense) tended to be quite reluctant to embrace a Jewish identity. When I asked them why that was the case, I was often met with the answer that they hadn't been brought up "in a Jewish way" or that they weren't "religious". While these explanations certainly made sense to a certain degree, I couldn't help wondering why there was this reluctance—in my mostly leftist surroundings—to identify as Jewish. I had other friends and acquaintances, racialised as something else than white, who did not express a similar reluctance. Many of these chose to embrace a political identity as "non-white" or "person of colour", studied antiracist theorists, and argued that racism was at the core of capitalist society, thereby inserting their own experience of being racialised as something other than white/Swedish into a larger societal frame, informed by a leftist perspective. For my Jewish friends and acquaintances, however, it seemed less obvious to relate to their Jewishness in a politicised way. Those in my surroundings who did embrace a Jewish identity also expressed an uncertainty as to what consequences that identification would imply in the political landscape in Sweden. Partly, this ambivalence and reluctance seem to differ from other national contexts where there are more established Jewish leftist traditions—for example, in the United States and United Kingdom—something that largely has been lacking in Sweden (see Blomqvist 2020 for an account of the short-lived history of Bund, as an example of a leftist Jewish tradition in Sweden). In other words, this made me interested in what the Swedish national context implies for the possibilities of lived Jewishness, beyond questions of racial hierarchies and the situation in Israel-Palestine.

These three aspects of my trajectory into research on anti-Jewish racism—the Global Left's solidarity with Palestine, racial hierarchies, and what seemed to be limited possibilities for some to embrace a Jewish identity in today's Sweden—informed my interest in the topic of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. They also made me think of contemporary anti-Jewish racism as something highly important to explore, not least at a historical conjuncture characterised by intense debates on national belonging and an upsurge of neo-fascist political parties and movements across the globe.

In relation to these reflections, one of the objectives of the dissertation has been to move the gaze beyond Israel-Palestine and instead explore how anti-Jewish racism as a particular form of Swedish racism is related to notions of nationhood, Eurocentric universalism, secularism and religion, and to further explore the complex and sometimes contradictory entanglements of multiple Swedish racisms. In the interview situation, however, early on I noticed that my desire to move beyond Israel-Palestine created problems. In the interview guide that I prepared, I formulated questions about Jewish identity and experiences of antisemitism/racism, but omitted questions concerning Israel-Palestine specifically. However, all interviewees—without exception—brought up the theme of Israel-Palestine in relation to their reflections on racism against Jews. When they did so, I asked further questions about this topic, in particular about what importance they attributed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for their personal experiences of anti-Jewish racism, and for their understandings of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden in general. While I entered the field with an intention to move away from a focus on Israel-Palestine, the encounter with the interviewees obliged me to partly reconsider this perspective, and instead start regarding the interviewees' understandings and opinions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as connected to their thoughts on anti-Jewish racism. Thus, the encounter with the field made me realise that the relation between lived experiences of anti-Jewish racism, public discourses in Sweden, and Israel-Palestine, was "messier" and more complex than I first had thought when I started the research process. In that sense, it made me more aware of tensions and contradictions within this research field, and forced me to navigate these tensions.

It's also worth mentioning that, despite the level of heterogeneity when it comes to the interviewees' view on the situation in Israel-Palestine, almost all of them asserted that there was some sort of bond to Israel or sense of personal connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among the majority of Jews in Sweden. In some cases, this was because the interviewees had family in Israel or had travelled to the country on numerous occasions, and sometimes because they felt that Israel constituted a safe haven in times of increasing antisemitism.

On other occasions, those among the interviewees who had been active in solidarity work with Palestine made a point of their Jewishness in relation to their political engagement with Israel-Palestine. The variety of these different connections to Israel and in some cases also to Palestine was something that challenged my preconceptions quite a lot, and that I learnt from. In the course of the interviews I realised that, for my interviewees, a position of distance vis-à-vis Israel-Palestine was rarely possible. I think it should be stressed once again that this didn't imply that the interviewees shared similar views of the conflict, but rather that the themes of the conflict and of Israeli society per se were important to them, also in those cases when this was expressed only as a frustration at involuntarily getting identified with the Israeli government. Chapter 9 is dedicated entirely to the way in which the topic of Israel-Palestine was present in the interviews, and what this meant for the interviewees' understanding of anti-Jewish racism.

For Burawoy, reflexive science emphasises the importance of the interview situation as a dialogue between the researcher and the interviewee. Unlike positivist science, in which the researcher strives to intervene as little as possible in the interview situation in order to minimise involuntary effects on the interviewee, a reflexive scholar engages in dialogue with the interviewee in order to better understand their subjectivity (Burawoy 1998, 22). The interviews that I conducted were largely constructed as a dynamic dialogue, where I had prepared a certain set of questions for the people I interviewed, but where the development of the conversation was largely spontaneous, and where the interviewees also asked questions of me or commented on my research. For example, almost all interviewees asked me if I was Jewish in some way and, when I answered that I wasn't, why I had chosen this as my research topic.

The fact that I am not Jewish and lack personal experiences of racism implies by necessity that I lack a lot of knowledge about both Jewish life in Sweden and about lived strategies for handling forms of racism in Sweden. Quite often, therefore, I got the impression that the interviewees thought my questions were somewhat innocent or naïve. For example, after one interview, I emailed the interviewee thanking her for her time and patience. She replied: "Thanks to you too. It was useful for me to reflect on things that I see as obvious." I think her remark captures something about the relation between the interviewee and myself as a researcher that was present in several interviews. To a certain extent, then, it seems likely that my position as an outsider to the Jewish community made me ask questions other than would a person embodying a position of an insider. Although some of the interviewees might have been surprised or even bothered by what they regarded as uninformed

questions on my part, my location as an outsider can also be seen as useful to a certain degree. While the interviewees told me about experiences that were obvious to them and that they might not have thought worth mentioning if I hadn't asked for them, these experiences—from my perspective—constitute important testimonies of what it means to be Jewish in the Swedish racial regime. In Chapters 7–10, which are dedicated to the interviews, I believe this relationality becomes clear, since many interviewees would tell me about what they regarded as quite trivial experiences, but which were surprising to me and which I found relevant to analyse.

In relation to my position as an outsider, two interviewees made it clear to me that they thought I wasn't very knowledgeable as far as Jewish history and culture were concerned, and that I needed to read more on these subjects. One of them even sent me a text message the day after the interview, expressing his worry that I didn't know enough about Jewish culture. While I openly agreed with them that I definitely should and would read more, I also emphasised that the focus of my research was neither historical nor cultural, but more related to notions of nationhood, racism and processes of inclusion and exclusion. However, I also believe that this spontaneous feedback can be understood as reflecting a sense among many interviewees in my sample that non-Jewish Swedes in general (of which they saw me as an example) have very limited knowledge about Jewish history and culture. Possibly, the irritation they expressed toward me therefore also reflected a general irritation toward non-Jewish Swedish society. In that way, these comments deepened my understanding of the perceived lack of knowledge among non-Jewish Swedes as far as anti-Jewish racism and Jewish history and culture are concerned. At the same time, most interviewees did not express irritation due to my lack of knowledge; rather, some of them seemed quite eager to inform me as much as possible about Jewish life and traditions.

Another example of how my position as an outsider was challenged at my entry into the field was in November 2018, when one key interviewee took me with her to visit Bajit, a Jewish cultural centre in downtown Stockholm, which also hosts a kindergarten and a school with pupils aged six to fifteen. I was immediately taken aback by the security measures in Bajit: at the gate we had to ring a bell and speak to a guard through an intercom, informing him of our names, who we were, and explaining the purpose of our visit, all of which made me feel tense. I remember wondering how psyches and subjectivities are formed among small children being surrounded by such a security system on a daily basis—something I had never seen previously at any other kindergarten, school or cultural centre that I had visited in Sweden.

Despite my previous knowledge of the violent threats against Jews and Jewish institutions in Sweden and Europe, the first-hand experiences of these pre-emptive security measures while visiting Bajit had an impact on me. It underlined the lethal consequences of racism and of how contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden can sometimes be experienced as a direct deadly threat, something I already was aware of but hadn't been confronted by in the same way before. Through this visit, it became more than clear to me that this violent threat is likely something that in an important way informs many Jewish subjectivities in Sweden.

One thing among many that impacted me was that so many of the interviewees started the interview by saying that they had hardly any experiences of antisemitism. Sometimes they said this even before the interview, when I first contacted them. At the beginning of the process of conducting interviews I therefore wondered whether I would obtain any accounts of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. I quickly realised, however, that it wouldn't be hard to do so. On the contrary, all interviewees shared experiences that I, based on conceptualisations of racism in the theoretical framework that informs this study, would understand as racism, but that they didn't necessarily categorise as racism and/or antisemitism. On the contrary, I realised that they often trivialised these experiences. When I instead asked if they had everyday experiences of subtle comments differentiating them as Jewish, more interviewees would tell me experiences that I categorised as racist. As discussed in the empirical chapters, the reluctance to name one's own experiences as antisemitic/racist obliged me to reflect on what is understood as antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism in today's Sweden, and to analyse what this might tell us about the Swedish racial regime.

An additional aspect that the encounter with the interviewees forced me to reconsider in relation to my own preconceptions about anti-Jewish racism in Sweden was religion. Since so much of the current public debate on antisemitism focuses on Israel-Palestine, I hadn't quite understood how important the categories of religion and secularism are for the articulations of racialisation of Jews in contemporary Sweden. Many interviewees, however, expressed great frustration at Christian and secular norms in Swedish society. By asking questions about these norms, I managed to gather more experiences of racism than I did when simply asking about experiences of antisemitism/racism. This in turn made me realise how important religion and secularism are in Swedish society for the creation of difference, constructions of a national "we", and for processes of "Othering".

Another recurring theme, that I discuss more in Chapter 8, was the level of relative invisibility that many interviewees told me characterised Jewish life in Sweden in relation to the majority population. Since my understanding when I

started the research process was that antisemitism was something that was being talked about quite a lot in the Swedish public debate, I had made the unconscious analogy that Jews as a collective in Sweden were quite visible. The interviewees, however, shared stories of silencing, invisibility and assimilation of Jewish life in Sweden, which in turn made me aware of the part this plays in the reproduction of "sameness" in a Swedish racial context. This also troubled my previous preconceptions of Jews passing as white in Swedish society as something unequivocally positive, and implied that I had to reflect on the complex power relations at play at the crossroads of passing as white, processes of racialisation, and the making of "difference" in Sweden.

Something else that occurred during the interviews was that most of the men I interviewed told me whether or not they were circumcised, without my asking any question about it. When the interviewees brought it up, it was often in relation to their sons, if they had any, and whether they as parents had chosen to circumcise their sons or not. Sometimes the theme of circumcision came up in relation to what some argued was an inability of the majority population in Sweden to understand the cultural importance of Jewish ritual circumcision on boys, an argument that had been present in discussions in Swedish mass media about non-medical circumcision on boys a few years earlier (see e.g. Rosenberg Jan. 13, 2012; Dencik Jan. 2, 2012; Einhorn Jan. 12, 2012). On other occasions, the theme of circumcision surfaced in relation to their own families of origin and how they felt they were (or were not) part of a larger Jewish community and tradition. Although I had not considered the importance of circumcision when I began the project, the fact that this theme appeared so many times in the interviews obliged me to reflect on the significance of the male body in the Jewish tradition, but also the relationality between masculinity and race in Sweden. In that sense, the theme of ritual circumcision reinforced my impression of the influence that Protestant-secular norms hold for experiences of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish context.

In addition to the theme of circumcision and my own upbringing in a Protestant-secular context, the Christian cultural background of Swedish society's allegedly secular "neutrality" was sometimes brought up by the interviewees in other ways that forced me to acknowledge a few of my own cultural blind spots. For example, one interviewee expressed annoyance at mass media's sometimes referring to the Jewish cemetery as a *kyrkogård* (churchyard) instead of a *begravningsplats* (graveyard). This made me aware that hitherto I had used both these words interchangeably, not realising that the former refers specifically to a Christian cemetery and is thus not a religiously neutral word. Another interviewee said he was annoyed when people would refer to *Pesach* as "the Jewish Easter". While the Swedish word for Easter, *Påsk*, seems to stem

etymologically from the Hebrew word *Pesach*, I interpret his dissatisfaction with the phrasing as reflecting a situation in which what is Jewish in Sweden is always attributed a marginal position vis-à-vis an alleged cultural neutrality (but which really is Protestant in nature), which in turn creates the need for a clarifying adjective ("Jewish") preceding the noun to specify it.

In other words, the encounter with the field and with the interviewees in particular challenged some of my preconceptions of anti-Jewish racism, and on some occasions also forced me to see that what I had believed was a neutral attitude or turn of phrase sometimes actually stemmed from a Protestant culture. Crucially, I learnt that there were themes that I hadn't paid much attention to (such as ritual circumcision or secularism/religion) or deliberately had tried to steer away from (such as Israel-Palestine), which in fact were integral to the interviewees and to their subjective understandings of anti-Jewish racism and Jewish identity in the Swedish context. Those "disturbances" in the research process made me re-evaluate my previous positions and contributed to the analysis of the interview material.

To sum up the first part of this chapter, the tradition of feminist methodology—understanding knowledge as always socially embedded—and of standpoint theory in particular, through its emphasis on knowledge coming from "below", have informed my entry point to the analysis of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. Moreover, inspired by Burawoy's Extended Case Method, I have regarded the enterprise of conducting this doctoral research project as a means to extend knowledge about anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime in dialogue with social theories. Emphasising both the centrality of theory for reflexive research as well as the importance of analysing the interrelationality between the researcher and the research participants, I have outlined how my theoretical framework—as described in Chapter 3—has informed my approach to the field, but also how my own social embeddedness, preconceptions and position as non-Jewish have affected the research project. We now turn to how different forms of empirical material together can further extend knowledge about anti-Jewish racism as part of the Swedish racial regime.

# Collecting the empirical material

## Working with different kinds of material

While the Extended Case Method in Burawoy's account primarily deploys ethnographical research techniques, such as interviews or participatory observations, Burawoy also discusses the usefulness of other research

techniques which can be put into dialogue with ethnographic material. For example, he remarks how, during fieldwork in Zambia, he used survey studies for contextualisation of the interviews he had conducted, something that implied an extension of his research material (Burawoy 1998, 29). In this dissertation, the bulk of the empirical material consists of 21 semi-structured in-depth interviews with self-identified Jews living in Sweden. In addition to these in-depth interviews, however, I have worked with participatory observation at a variety of events in the cities of Malmö and Stockholm, and also with two other research techniques: document and film analysis, inspired by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Black cultural studies, respectively. Document and film analysis differs from the in-depth interviews and participatory observation in the sense that it does not imply the same interrelationality between subjects as ethnographical techniques do, since the latter engage with human-to-human interaction, and the former does not. Nevertheless, the incorporation of these techniques proved to be useful for my research, in the sense that they extended some of the analyses of the ethnographical material. In other cases, the document and film analysis, through a dialogue with my theoretical framework, helped me see themes that were also present in the interview material, but which probably wouldn't have caught my attention without these techniques. In that sense, both the ethnographical material as well as the document and film analysis constitute different aspects of the empirical material of the thesis, all of them in dialogue with the same theoretical framework and hence speaking to each other. At the same time, the variety of the empirical material permits a grasp of different features of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. While the interviews capture subjective experiences of anti-Jewish racism, the film and document analyses explore how anti-Jewish racism, and discussions about it, operate on discursive levels in the Swedish racial context. The fact that I conducted parts of the discourse analysis before starting interviewing had the advantage that I could ask the interviewees about some of the themes that were present in the analysed discursive material. The mixture of different kinds of material thereby enables a richer analysis of Swedish anti-Jewish racism, and permits to further extend theorisations of racism in Sweden. By the order in which I have chosen to present the empirical chapters—document and film analysis first, and interview analysis thereafter—the former can also be seen as partly functioning as a background for the analysis of the interviews.

## In-depth interviews

I have conducted in-depth interviews (Hesse-Biber 2014) with 21 women and men living in Sweden who identified themselves as Jews. Of these, 18 were conducted during the months of October and November 2018, with another one in June 2019, and two additional ones in September 2021. The interviewees were living in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Lund. The former three are the largest cities in Sweden with well-established Jewish congregations, where it was easy for me to gain access to interviewees. Lund is a town near Malmö, it hosts my university, and there is a Jewish association there. Among the informants, nine were women, twelve were men. The eldest interviewee was born in 1934, the youngest in 1995. All but two were either born in Sweden or had migrated to Sweden as very young children. I strove for heterogeneity in the sample, in order to hear as many different voices as possible. However, it should be noted that none of the interviewees were *Mizrahim*, i.e. from the Middle East or Northern Africa. All were of European descent, and the vast majority were *Ashkenazim*. Although this means that experiences of interviewees from e.g. the MENA region or with a migration background from Latin America were missing in the sample, the focus in the material on experiences of racism among Jews of European descent has the value of rendering it possible to detect certain features of the Swedish racial regime and of constructions of Swedishness, not least in relation to notions of whiteness and Europeanness. While there was also a certain middle-class bias in the sample, I conducted interviews with people who had very different relations to the Jewish community in Sweden, who harboured different understandings of what Jewishness meant for them, and who also had different political worldviews and degrees of religious identification.

In order to find the interviewees, I proceeded in several ways. First, I contacted some people who had been visible in the Swedish public debate on issues related to anti-Jewish racism and/or Jewish identity, and who had expressed different perspectives on these matters. I also placed an advertisement on a homepage for Jews in favour of Israeli-Palestinian peace, since I was curious to hear their experiences and understandings of anti-Jewish racism in a political context, which to a large extent is dominated by debates on Muslim antisemitic perpetrators, allegedly as a consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, I contacted a few Jewish acquaintances, or friends' acquaintances, who were very helpful in putting me in contact with more people involved in Jewish life in Sweden, following the notion of snowball sampling (Wykes 2018). One of these helped me place an ad for my project in a closed Facebook group for Jewish women, something that helped

me to get in touch with more informants. Furthermore, one interviewee with whom I got in contact was particularly generous and became a key interviewee in Stockholm, where she took me with her to Jewish institutions and introduced me to other people in the local Jewish community. In all these cases, I said that I was interested in exploring antisemitism, how it related both to other forms of racism and to antiracism, and that I was interested in learning more about experiences of antisemitism and Jewish identity.

After getting in contact with the interviewees, we agreed where we would meet up. Sometimes they hospitably invited me to their homes, on other occasions we met up at a café or a bar, and a few times I also invited them to my home in Malmö. One of the interviews was conducted via Zoom. Before starting an interview, I reiterated that the purpose of my research was to explore anti-Jewish racism in relation to Swedish racism more generally, that I was interested in Jewish identity and experiences of antisemitism, and that I followed the ethical guidelines established by the Swedish Research Council, meaning that the interviewees would be de-identified, and that they had the right to stop the interview at any given point without any negative consequences whatsoever for them. I also gave them a document with information about my research project and the above ethical guidelines, after which they gave me their informed oral consent to participate in the interview. I refrained from asking them for written consent, since I was worried this would make the interviewees feel uncomfortable, by giving them the impression that they were somehow subjected to legal control, which can be seen as particularly problematic in relation to experiences of racism (E.J. Gordon 2000).

Inspired by feminist explorations of the in-depth interview, the purpose of these interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the interviewees as far as experiences of racism/antisemitism were concerned, and to understand how they related to their Jewish identity in the context of the Swedish racial regime. The interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes and were typically centred upon two main questions that I asked the interviewees: "Can you tell me how you have related to Jewish identity over time?" and "Can you tell me about your experiences of antisemitism?" Evolving from the initial answers to these questions, new topics were brought into conversation, and many interviewees would tell me about their family history, childhood memories, reflections on contemporary anti-Jewish racism, and so on. As already discussed in the previous section about the interrelationality between researcher and interviewees, the interview setting was often quite dynamic and the way the interviewees related to me became an important part of how I analysed the material. While Burawoy states that

psychoanalysis can be seen as a prototype for the interview setting (Burawoy 1998, 27), I am somewhat unhappy with this metaphor, principally because I inscribe myself in a feminist tradition where knowledge production with marginalised groups is seen as a tool for social change (Hesse-Biber 2014, 184), seeking to understand how subjective experiences at the individual level relate to larger societal structures and forms of oppression, something that is not the purpose of clinical psychoanalysis. Also, the analogy with psychoanalysis is incomplete given the ways in which I engaged in the interviews. For example, I asked many follow-up questions about things they said that weren't clear to me, in order to gather as much precise information as possible and avoid ambiguities, and sometimes I also revealed my own emotional reactions to their narratives through my facial expressions. Occasionally, as described above, I disclosed my own ignorance about certain topics, or my own insecurity as to how to interpret certain events or episodes, and I would then ask the interviewees to clarify these things to me.

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed all of them and then codified them through different topics, terms and narratives, which I then organised into different thematic groups. For the process of writing the empirical interview chapters, I centred the analysis of each theme on a number of quotes that captured how the interviewees in different ways related to a given theme. Thereafter, I started describing what patterns, tensions and nuances were present in the research material in relation to these themes, and how they spoke to the conceptual frame of the dissertation. By doing this, I "extended" the empirical material to the project's theoretical frame, in order to insert the material into a wider social context and thereby make possible a deepened understanding of features of the Swedish racial regime. In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, I do not provide a list of them with biographical information. Instead, I share the information that I understand as relevant—such as age, gender or various situational circumstances—in direct relation to the analysis of the quotes in the interview chapters. In other words, I do not present the interviewees following a pre-established pattern requiring a certain set of biographical data, but instead let the analysis guide what biographical information I give the reader. By so doing, I strive to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees and to create a form of "cacophonous polyvocality" (Thody 2006, 129; Allocco 2009), where it is the totality of tensions, nuances and various lived experiences in the sample that is at the core of the analysis.

## Participatory observations

During the research process and in addition to the interviews, I have also participated as an observer in a number of events related to the topic of anti-Jewish racism. This can be seen as an attempt to extend the interviews by trying to grasp the tacit knowledge that is embedded in the social life in which anti-Jewish racism is experienced and discussed, in order to enhance the quality of the analysis of the interviews. According to Dewalt and Dewalt, participant observation makes it possible to gain a greater understanding of references, jokes, patterns and alike which are present in social relations surrounding the object of study, but it also shapes the way researchers interpret their observations (Dewalt and Dewalt 2011, 10 ff). Moreover, they argue that participant observation ameliorates the possibilities for the researcher to critically examine both assumptions and beliefs that exist within a research field, as well as the researcher's own presuppositions (p. 11). Inspired by feminist contributions to qualitative research methods, I understand participant observation also as a research technique to analyse emotions as part of the research process and to understand the researcher as an active subject who is part of the research they conduct, thereby opening up for the knowledge that only an embodied presence can capture as far as atmosphere, subtleties, conversational topics in informal contexts, and silences are concerned (DeVault 1996; Reger 2001).

The participant observations covered different kinds of events, places and gatherings. I participated in a couple of demonstrations against antisemitism—one in Malmö in December 2017 and another, in commemoration of the November pogroms, in Stockholm in 2018. One interviewee also took me to visit Bajit, a Jewish cultural centre in Stockholm, as well as the Great Synagogue in Stockholm for the annual commemoration in 2018 of the November pogroms, organised by the Swedish Committee Against Antisemitism (Swedish abbreviation: SKMA). In October 2018 I participated in an educational day, also organised by the SKMA, whose purpose was to increase knowledge about antisemitism among schoolteachers and social workers in Malmö municipality, where journalists and other professionals were also welcome. At the beginning of 2018, I attended a lecture and a subsequent conversation on the topic of antisemitism and islamophobia in the Malmö neighbourhood of Rosengård, arranged by an Afro-Swedish organisation and directed at adolescents in the neighbourhood. In May 2019 I attended a workshop dedicated to "antisemitism, islamophobia and other forms of racism in Malmö", in the Malmö neighbourhood of Nydala, by *Hela Malmö*, a youth organisation for social justice based in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas in Malmö. Furthermore, at the beginning

of 2021, I observed digitally (due to the restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic) the Holocaust Remembrance Day organised by Malmö municipality, dedicated to the memory of both the Shoah, as the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, and of *Porajmos*, its Romani equivalent. The same evening, I also watched the live-streaming of the Holocaust Remembrance Day organised in Stockholm by the Living History Forum, where Prime Minister Stefan Löfven among others participated. Finally, in October 2021, I followed the live-streaming of "A Celebration of Jewish Life in Sweden", an event which took place in the synagogue in Malmö, once again with the presence of Stefan Löfven and others, within the frame of the "Remember-React – Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism", an international conference organised by the Swedish government.

My participation in these events of different nature and dedicated to different audiences made it possible to deepen my understanding of a number of aspects related to anti-Jewish racism and to observe the way in which antisemitism was being spoken about, understood and remembered, as well as themes that were omitted in relation to the past and present of anti-Jewish racism. It also made it possible to observe tensions in the atmosphere when certain topics related to anti-Jewish racism were being discussed. Sometimes I could use my observations from an event to formulate questions for the interviews I conducted. On other occasions, some of the things that an interviewee had talked to me about helped me to analyse the event I was observing. Generally speaking, the cases of participant observation helped me to crystallise themes that appeared as relevant to explore further during the research process.

During or after these events, I took field notes. Sometimes these were more formal and covered the structure of a certain program, sometimes I just wrote down key words that seemed relevant to me. On other occasions I noted my observations of my own thoughts and reactions or the atmosphere that I perceived in the room. The events were all quite emotionally intense, which made me return to them in my memory and through my field notes many times during the research process. I noticed that when I reacted strongly to an event, it meant that there were aspects in the event that I had to unpack intellectually with the help of theories, in order to make sense of my observations and to incorporate them into my analysis. In that sense, they helped me to ask more informed questions, both to the interviewees but also to myself, about racism as a social phenomenon in Sweden.

## Document analysis

Besides the conducted in-depth interviews, through which it was possible to capture different Swedish-Jewish subjectivities, in order to better explore experiences of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, I also wanted to see how anti-Jewish racism operates at the discursive level in Swedish society. For this purpose, I have conducted two analyses of public discourses. The first comprises articles published in December 2017 and February 2018, in the aftermath of antisemitic events in Malmö and Gothenburg, after the Trump administration's decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. During these weeks, antisemitism in Sweden was being discussed quite a lot in Swedish mass media, and I wanted to explore the discursive structures of this discussion and its racial implications. Thereby, I hoped to better understand both the location of antisemitism in Swedish public discourse, but also the implicit racial assumptions, not least in relation to white Swedishness, of this discussion. The second analysis concerns a debate and decision at the congress of the Centre Party in 2019 to ban non-medical male circumcision on minors, since this is a theme that potentially regulates Jewish life in Sweden. While much of the research on antisemitism has focused on the alleged extremes of the political spectrum, I wanted to explore racialisation of Jews among the political mainstream, in order to analyse how anti-Jewish racist structures can be understood to be part of Swedish "normalcy".

For the analysis of these documents, I was inspired by the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse structures of power reproduced within discourses, understanding these latter as both constituting and constituted by the social order (Fairclough 2000; Wodak and Meyer 2016; Boréus and Bergström 2017). This tradition is rooted in a materialist and dialectical understanding of the world, but one that also emphasises the importance of discourse as part of a social reality, thereby providing the opportunity of exploring the dynamical relation between discourses and social structures. As a scholarly tradition it has proved very fruitful in analysing discursive expressions of power asymmetries, and how such relations are reproduced through language, not least as far as racial relations are concerned (Wetherell and Potter 1992). Moreover, CDA has shown how racial discursive strategies work to produce notions of the racial "Other", as well as how power works in various ways to exclude those categorised as the "Other" (Wodak and Dijk 2000). The two chapters dedicated to this document analysis explore and unveil structures of unequal power relations, following the emancipatory agenda of CDA. In dialogue with the theoretical framework, the analysis primarily focuses on anti-Jewish racism embedded in discourses on

nationhood and "Swedishness", but also in relation to anti-Muslim racism, notions of gender and sexuality, and secularism and Protestantism. Thereby, the chapters seek to explore the entanglements of anti-Jewish discourses with other social structures, in order to see how contemporary anti-Jewish racism can be expressed within the Swedish racial regime.

Chapter 5 consists of two parts dedicated to discourse analysis in relation to anti-Jewish racism. In the first part I explore media articles discussing contemporary antisemitism in Sweden. I collected mass-media articles reporting or commenting on antisemitism in Sweden from the period between December 9, 2017 (when an anti-Trump demonstration took place in Malmö) and February 28, 2018 (when the public debate on the antisemitic incidents was largely over), from three major Swedish daily newspapers: *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (based in Malmö), *Göteborgs-Posten* (based in Gothenburg) and *Dagens Nyheter* (based in Stockholm), thereby striving for some geographical variety in the press coverage of the incidents. While these articles do not constitute the entirety of the press articles reporting or commenting on the antisemitic incidents of December 2019, and while there were other types of media (radio, TV, social media) also covering the incidents, I argue that this selection of articles does grasp the general public discussion in Sweden that followed these incidents. It should be noted that all three newspapers define their political affiliation as "liberal" (in various shades), which by and large reflects Sweden's mass-mediatic landscape, and the reports from the public radio and TV did not seem to differ ideologically from the retrieved press articles, as far as reports and comments on the incidents were concerned. In some cases, I also incorporated references to press articles outside the selected time span, to clarify the Swedish political discursive climate, as well as some interdiscursive aspects of the mass-media discourse. In order to pursue the analysis, I went through the articles looking for recurring themes. Eventually, it became clear to me that it was possible to structure the analysis according to how three different racial categories were treated discursively in the material: Jews, "Middle Easterners" and white Sweden. Through this thematic structure it was possible to explore racial hierarchies, notions of "Swedishness" and different forms of anti-Jewish racism, and work through my theoretical framework but also expand further on some of the theoretical themes, notably Jewish (in)visibility and the connections between Swedishness and whiteness.

In the second part of the chapter, I explore discourses of features of anti-Jewish racism in the public debate in Sweden during 2019 in the case of a mainstream political party. While there were several interesting cases in the public debate in Sweden that I could have explored, I decided to analyse the decision by the congress of the Centre Party to prohibit non-medical male

circumcision on minors. Here, the empirical material consists of the congress motion arguing for a ban on non-medical male circumcision, the response from the party board to the motion, the video broadcast from the congress debate on public television, and declarations from both sides made to the mass media following the party's passing of the motion. I was particularly interested in how "Swedishness" and "Swedish normalcy" were being portrayed, and the implications of this for notions of "Jewishness". I was also interested to see how expressions of anti-Jewish racism related to expressions of anti-Muslim racism, and the role of secularism, Protestantism, gender and sexuality in these expressions. Therefore, I looked for themes in the collected material that in some way spoke to these concepts, and tried to see how they were connected to each other, and structured the analysis around those connections.

Inspired by Boréus and Bergström (2017), the analyses of these different documents and speech acts have focused on how the individual discursive elements relate to larger societal discursive practices. Understanding these discursive acts as both constituted by the context of Swedish and European racisms, but also reproducing and constituting racialising discourses, the empirical material is regarded as part of a discursive order that is dialectically organised, opening up for a dynamic analysis in which anti-Jewish racism is perceived to be part of a larger social totality in which the nation-state plays a central role. Once again stating the importance of theory for reflexive research, as well as the purpose to improve theories about the social world we live in (Burawoy 1998), these document analyses exist in dialogue with both the theoretical framework of the thesis as well as the rest of the empirical material, in order to expand our understanding of racial structures in Sweden and anti-Jewish racism within them.

## Film analysis

Having conducted interviews with Jews in Sweden and analysed various mass-media articles and debates related to anti-Jewish racism, I decided to perform a film analysis of Ingmar Bergman's renowned *Fanny and Alexander* (Bergman 1982b). The idea to explore a Swedish cultural artefact, and thereby to further extend the analysis of anti-Jewish racism as part of the Swedish racial regime, was partly inspired by ethnologist Barbro Klein's (2003) observation that Sweden is a country where it is possible to exhibit *Fanny and Alexander* without the audience grasping that one of its most central figures is a Jew. This is due to what Klein argues is a general and longstanding silence surrounding Jewish life and culture in Sweden. Klein's observation of this silence and invisibility of Swedish-Jewish life could be seen as mirroring a societal

situation in Sweden where the category of Jews has had to manage the pressure to assimilate to Swedish Protestant norms, and where Sweden together with other Nordic countries has been constructed as a "homogenising nation-state" (Yuval-Davis 2011) with limited space to allow for cultural "difference" (Gullestad 2002). With this in mind, I approached *Fanny and Alexander* with the idea that an analysis of the film would have the potentiality to further explore the Swedish racial regime with a specific focus on anti-Jewish racism. The film, which exists in two versions—one three hours long, and one five hours long (originally broadcast as a TV series)—has been celebrated both internationally and domestically. Produced 40 years ago by Sweden's internationally most venerated film–maker, it is still regularly consumed in today's Sweden. The longer version of the film is often broadcast on public television in Sweden around Christmastime, and adapted versions of it have also been performed at theatres in Sweden.

Inspired by the tradition of Black Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall's conceptualisation and critique of audio-visual culture has been inspirational for the film analysis. This includes both Hall's emphasis that the analysis of audio-visual cultural products should be located within a larger societal frame, as well as his concern regarding representation of racial difference in particular. In the article "Decoding-Encoding", Hall ([1973] 1993) criticises what in communication analysis prior to the 1980s was a theoretical dominance of the paradigm of the "sender-message-receiver". According to Hall, this paradigm was built on a linear understanding of communication, in which an active "sender" sends a message (that is, communicates) to a passive "receiver". Against this conceptualisation of communication as an act of passive reception of fixed messages, Hall suggests that a communicative event be understood as a process in which the "receiving" part is an active agent in their own right, as well as something that occurs in a wider societal framework. The power structures in the society in which the communicative event occurs are therefore thought to shape the conditions for both the creation of the communicative event as well as the audience's capacity to interpret it.

Hall therefore suggests a model, partly inspired by Marx's analysis of commodity production, in which both "production" and "consumption" of meaning must be analysed. Moreover, he uses the concept of "relative autonomy" (p. 510) to make sense of how these two parts of the communicative process relate to one another, but also how the communicative event relates to society at large. For Hall, the production of a message is thought to pass through a process of "encoding", in which it is attached a certain meaning dependent on the cultural hegemony characterising the society in which the communicative event occurs. On the consuming end, the audience

has to "decode" the message, once again in relation to hegemonic culture, in order to make sense of the message. From this analytical perspective, the communication process is thus never a completely linear or simple process in which a message is transparently and unproblematically transferred from a sender to a receiver, but instead is embedded in a complex structure of dominance, and imprinted with institutional power relations. Central to this understanding of communication is therefore the dominant cultural order, in which the communicative event occurs and which attaches meaning to the message produced and consumed. However, Hall carefully emphasises that a certain cultural order can be dominant but not determined, since there are always some social actors who contest it. This in turn means that a message can be read in a variety of ways, ranging from reproducing the dominant hegemonic order, via negotiating with it, to opposing it (pp. 515-17). This means that a message can be polysemic, i.e. simultaneously having multiple meanings, although Hall also asserts that there is generally a "preferred meaning" aligned with the dominant cultural order (p. 513). Hence, it is necessary to analyse power relations of the cultural frame in which the communicative event occurs.

Although an art form such as Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* cannot be reduced to a simple "message", Hall's ([1973] 1993) approach to communication in relation to a hegemonic cultural order has been analytically fruitful for the endeavour of analysing *Fanny and Alexander* from a perspective that is primarily sociological. Hall's conceptualisation of the communication process, his rejection of the "sender-message-receiver" paradigm, and his emphasis on the social structures in which a cultural product is produced and consumed, offer a frame to locate the analysis of *Fanny and Alexander* within a theoretically elaborated understanding of the Swedish racial regime. Connecting this to Burawoy's emphasis on the importance of theory for the Extended Case Method, the analysis of the film is therefore informed by an understanding that race, but also the categories of gender and sexuality, are pivotal to social power relations. In our case, special attention is also accorded to religion and secularism for an exploration of processes of racialisation of Jews in Sweden. It therefore becomes relevant to analyse how these categories are represented in the film. Through the concept of the "relative autonomy" of both the production and the consumption of cultural product, it should furthermore be stressed that *Fanny and Alexander* opens up for a variety of possible interpretations. While the film is not thought to simply and unproblematically mediate a Swedish racial reality, it is still possible to "decode" the film and to explore how racial representations of Jews and of relations between Jews and white non-Jews are depicted in the film, and to

discuss how these representations relate to the Swedish racial regime in a complex way. Thereby, an exploration of *Fanny and Alexander* opens up for the possibility to explore features of the Swedish racial regime, analysing how representations of Jews in the film relate to power structures in Swedish society.

By necessity, any analysis of *Fanny and Alexander* won't be able to cover all the possible themes and features present in the film. My analysis has therefore focused on aspects that are relevant for an exploration of the Swedish racial regime with a specific focus on anti-Jewish racism. This means that close attention has been paid to the portrayal of the Jewish characters, their relation to the non-Jewish characters, the function of the Jewish characters for the overall plot, and how this could be analysed in relation to the process of "othering", nationhood, religion, race, gender and sexuality. Also, it has led to the emphasis of the analysis being theoretically orientated, with the intention of expanding an exploration of the Swedish racial regime.

In practice, I watched the film several times while taking notes. I wrote down quotes that seemed especially significant to me and that captured an atmosphere, a relation or an event. I tried to describe scenes that seemed of crucial importance, and I paid special attention to all the scenes where Jewish characters were present, and tried to see how they were portrayed in the scene and in relation to the other characters. Ruminating over the film, the various scenes, and the role the Jewish characters play in relation to the film's protagonist, it occurred to me that "gendered-religious-racialised space" was a productive notion for structuring the analysis and to grasp some of the racial and gendered features present in it. Through this notion, it was possible both to describe the overall plot of the film, but also to analyse the relationality between the Jewish and non-Jewish characters, in relation to gender, race, religion, sexuality, nationhood and the process of "othering". The concept that *Fanny and Alexander* is built up around different gendered and racialised spaces has therefore structured my analysis of the film.

To sum up the second half of this chapter, the different research techniques I have deployed in the process of writing this dissertation have had the purpose, inspired by Burawoy, to extend knowledge of the Swedish racial regime, by a specific focus on anti-Jewish racism. Through these various techniques, I attempt to show how anti-Jewish racism is expressed and experienced in a variety of situations and at different levels of Swedish society. Combining in-depth interviews, participant observation, and discourse and film analysis, I thereby hope to capture various tensions, nuances, ambiguities and complexities present in contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden.

# Chapter 5: "Swedishness" and racialisation of Jews in Swedish public debates

## Introduction

Before digging into the in-depth interviews, which constitute the bulk of the empirical material of the thesis, we turn to an exploration of how discourses surrounding notions of "Swedishness" are constructed in relation to processes of discursive racialisation of the category of Jews in Sweden. The discourse analysis, together with the film analysis in Chapter 6, constitutes a frame for the chapters dedicated to the analysis of the in-depth interviews, making it possible to situate the interview material within the broader social and racial structures characterising the Swedish racial regime. In that way, the discourse analysis in combination with the film analysis and the in-depth interviews contributes to research on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism in Sweden by relating experiences of anti-Jewish racism to racist discourses permeating Swedish society.

Building on the theoretical frame that was discussed in Chapter 3, the Swedish racial regime can be seen as building on notions of "Swedish exceptionalism" (Ruth 1984; Schierup and Ålund 2011)—notably including ideas of Sweden as extraordinarily modern and progressive—the notion of Sweden as a "raceless" society (Sharma 2015), but also of Protestant secularism framing hegemonic perceptions of cultural "neutrality", as well as creating boundaries against the religion of "Others" (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013). Moreover, phenomena like femonationalism and homonationalism contribute to constructing Sweden as a society protective of minoritised groups in relation to perceived threats of the Oriental "Other" (Alm et al. 2021; Kehl 2020). This chapter builds on these insights and aims to explore how the category of Jews is constructed through multiple and sometimes contradictory processes of

inclusions and exclusions in relation to "Swedishness", sometimes explicitly and on other occasions more implicitly.

The chapter explores two public debates that had a wide impact at national level. The first is a public discussion on antisemitism that took place in various Swedish newspapers at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, in the aftermath of several antisemitic attacks that occurred after the Trump administration's decision in December 2017 to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The second case is the discussion held at the congress of the liberal Centre Party in 2019 concerning a motion to ban non-medical male circumcision on minors. The motion was passed by the party congress, which caused reactions among Jewish organisations and others, and at the following party congress in 2021 the motion was rejected.

For the analysis of the first case, I have collected mass-media articles reporting or commenting on antisemitism in Sweden from the period between December 9, 2017 (when an anti-Trump demonstration took place in Malmö) and February 28, 2018 (when the public debate on the antisemitic events was largely over), from three major Swedish daily newspapers: *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (based in Malmö), *Göteborgs-Posten* (based in Gothenburg) and *Dagens Nyheter* (based in Stockholm), thereby striving for a certain geographical variety in the press coverage of the incidents. While these articles do not constitute the entirety of the press articles reporting or commenting on these antisemitic events, and while there were other types of media (radio, tv, social media) also covering the incidents, this selection of articles does grasp the general public discussion in Sweden that followed these incidents. While it should be noted that all these three newspapers define their political affiliation as "liberal" (in various shades), this largely reflects Sweden's mass-mediatic landscape, and the reports from the public radio and tv did not seem to differ ideologically from the retrieved press articles, as far as reports and comments on the events were concerned. In some cases, I have also incorporated references to press articles outside the selected time span, to clarify the Swedish political discursive climate, as well as some interdiscursive aspects of the mass-media discourse.

For the second case, concerning the discussion of the congress of the Centre Party to ban non-medical male circumcision on minors, the empirical material consists of the text of the congress motion arguing for a ban on male circumcision, the response from the party board to the motion, a video broadcast from the congress debate on Swedish public television, declarations from both sides made to the mass media following the party's passing of the motion, as well as some reactions from outside of the party. Thereby, the

empirical material captures aspects of the debate both inside and outside of the party, and analyses perspectives from both sides of the debate.

Inspired by the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2000; Wodak and Meyer 2016; Boréus and Bergström 2017), as discussed in Chapter 4, the analysis of these different documents focuses on how the individual discursive elements relate to larger societal and racist discursive practices. In both cases, I am particularly interested in how "Swedishness" is portrayed, and the implications of this for processes of racialisation of Jews. The analysed material constitutes examples of how hegemonic notions of "Swedishness" are discursively produced in the Swedish public debate, and of how it constructs boundaries of who is included and excluded, respectively, from "Swedishness". By exploring these discourses, it becomes possible to analyse how the category of Jews is ambiguously racialised in the public debate both in relation to "Swedishness", but also in relation to "Others" who are discursively produced as "non-Swedish".

## Criminalisation of Muslims as antisemites

On December 9, 2017, after President Donald Trump had announced his decision to move the US embassy, a pro-Palestinian demonstration repudiating the decision took place in the city of Malmö in southern Sweden. According to reports in the regional newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, individuals among the anti-Trump demonstrators chanted antisemitic slogans (Monikander and TT Dec. 9, 2017; Lönneus Dec. 11, 2017). The same day, the synagogue in the city of Gothenburg was attacked with Molotov cocktails (Canoilas and Ohlsson Dec. 9, 2017). A few days later, the Jewish cemetery in Malmö was also attacked, the synagogue in the city was threatened, and these violent events were interpreted by the mass media as being connected to Trump's decision to move the embassy (Viktorsson Dec. 12, 2017). These anti-Jewish racist events led to strong reactions. Politicians from all over the political spectrum, as well as Palestinian and Muslim organisations, condemned the overtly antisemitic slogans used at the demonstration, as well as the physical attacks on Jewish institutions.

Following these events, much of the discussion in the mass media was centred on why antisemitism was seemingly growing in Sweden and by whom it was

perpetrated. Interviewed by the press on the sources of antisemitism in Sweden, Ingrid Lomfors, superintendent of the Living History Forum,[19] declared:

> The antisemitism that is most salient today is both the one coming from the extreme right, which we saw during this fall in the case of the Nordic Resistance Movement, and the one that we associate with the Middle East. (TT Dec. 11, 2017)

In the quote above, Lomfors, as a representative of a state institution, claimed that there were two main sources of contemporary antisemitism in Sweden: neo-Nazism and "the Middle East". It is noteworthy that while the former is a political ideology and social movement, which individuals deliberately adhere to, the latter is a vast geographical region to which people are associated collectively. Moreover, in the quote above, it appears as if both these forms of antisemitism were equally threatening to Jews in Sweden. This juxtaposition of Nazism and "the Middle East" is not new in the Swedish public discourse. Back in 2009, Jimmie Åkesson, chairman of the Sweden Democrats, wrote an article in which he declared that "Islam" was the biggest foreign threat against Sweden since World War II (Åkesson Oct. 19, 2009). On that occasion, his anti-Muslim statement was quite widely condemned (Elfström and TT Oct. 19, 2009). A few years later, however, the political climate in Sweden had changed to the degree that this sort of juxtaposition, of (neo-)Nazism and the Middle East/Islam/Arabs,[20] seemed to have become normalised as part of a mainstream discourse and could therefore be uttered by representatives of a state institution. This understanding of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism resembles the so-called "new antisemitism" paradigm which some scholars of antisemitism have put forward, as discussed in Chapter 2. This builds on the understanding that contemporary racism against Jews is primarily channelled through criticism against the State of Israel (Taguieff 2004; Iganski and Kosmin 2003), a notion that has been criticised by critical race scholars for reproducing orientalist notions of the Middle East as a threat against "the West" (Peace 2009; Gardell 2010).

19 The Living History Forum (Forum för Levande Historia) is a state authority under the Ministry of Culture, created in 2003. According to its homepage, its mission is "to work with issues related to tolerance, democracy and human rights, using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point". Moreover, it has the special mission from the state to inform the public about the Holocaust and about "crimes against humanity committed by communist regimes". See http://www.levandehistoria.se/

20 The line between these categories—representing geography, religion and ethnicity—is blurry in Western orientalist discourse but has in common that they are all representations of the figure of the "Oriental Other". See Said (1978/2003).

However, the most salient feature of the discussion on antisemitism that emerged after the anti-Jewish racist events of December 2017 is not the juxtaposition of neo-Nazism and "the Middle East" as two equally serious antisemitic threats, but rather the primacy of the latter. In a declaration to newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* in relation to the demonstration in Malmö against antisemitism, Minister for Culture Alice Bah Kuhnke from the Green Party said:

> I follow the hatred very carefully. The biggest problem when it comes to antisemitism is that many people have come to Sweden from countries that have filled them with a rhetoric of hatred. (Mehmedagic Dec. 16, 2017)

In this quote, which is representative of the discourse in the sample of mass-media articles during the studied time period, migrants were singled out as the most serious threat against Jews in Sweden. Although no particular region of the world was explicitly mentioned in the quote by the Minister for Culture, there is no doubt that the Middle East was what she implicitly referred to, since the notion that there is a specific form of antisemitism among Swedish residents from the Middle East has been part of the discursive climate in Sweden for several years (see e.g. Al Naher Nov. 12, 2015). Moreover, the targeting of Swedish residents with a Middle Eastern background as an antisemitic collective should not be seen as a single event, but rather seems to resonate with the official view of the Swedish government. An illustration of this is an interview with Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in quarterly magazine Jewish Chronicle, conducted before the anti-Jewish events of December 2017. In this interview, the Prime Minister stated the following:

> We should not close our eyes to the fact that many people have come here from the Middle East, where antisemitism is a widespread idea, almost a part of ideology. We must become even more clear, dare to talk about this more. Although Muslims are a vulnerable group, it is not more legitimate for them to be antisemites. […] Antisemitism is not okay in Sweden. (Silberstein December, 2017)

Here, the Prime Minister clearly singled out Middle Easterners/Muslims—two categories that he used synonymously in the quote above—as the main antisemitic problem in Sweden. Through this discursive act, Middle Easterners/Arabs/Muslims are criminalised as an embodiment of antisemitism and as the most serious form of threat against Jews in Sweden. This in turn implies that increased anti-Jewish violence is primarily understood as a result of migration of people to Sweden from the Middle East. This criminalisation of

Muslims (and/or Middle Easterners/Arabs) can be seen in the light of how delinquency in Swedish media debates is often linked to notions of "young men with a foreign background", who are then portrayed as a social problem and described as perpetrators of violence, as analysed by Stjernborg, Tesfahuney and Wretstrand (2015). According to them, such media images build on a colonial and dichotomous worldview, portraying "the West" as civilised and in opposition to a supposedly primitive non-white "Other". Moreover, it is argued that these media images instigate a "politics of fear" leading to increased levels of surveillance of groups portrayed as criminal. It can also be seen in the light of postcolonial feminist debates on "dangerous Others" in the Global South. From this perspective, such "Others" are in Western dominant discourses seen as a threat toward alleged universalistic European values, instigating the West to intervene in the Global South in order to "save" people from those depicted as "dangerous" (Spivak 1988; Chandra Talpade Mohanty 2003). It is reminiscent of how Muslims as a collective in my material were depicted as a "threat" in opposition to alleged "Swedish" values.

Another example was in February 2018, when Olle Schmidt, member of the Malmö Municipal Council on behalf of the Liberal Party, suggested that Malmö create a schoolbook on the history of antisemitism. In an interview with the regional newspaper, he explained his proposal in the following way:

> I know this is a sensitive topic. But antisemitism has become worse and worse. Malmö is exceptional. We must talk openly about the fact that much of the hatred comes from people with roots in the Middle East. […] A compulsory schoolbook in the schools of Malmö would increase the understanding of the roots of the hatred against Jews. But also the comprehension for what applies in our country: antisemitism does not belong in Sweden. (Lönneus Feb. 14, 2018)

In this quote, as well as in the one uttered by the Prime Minister, antisemitism is clearly located outside Sweden, but is described as having entered Sweden through migration from the Middle East. Here, it is also worth remarking on the special position conferred to Malmö in this quote, as a city exceptional in its antisemitism. Malmö, the third-largest city in Sweden, is located at the southern end of Sweden and has a bridge connecting the city with Copenhagen, thus linking Sweden with Continental Europe. Through its associations in the public discourse with both antisemitism and immigration, Malmö is pictured as the gateway through which antisemitism enters into Sweden from abroad. As noted by criminologist Leandro Schclarek Mulinari (2017), Malmö is often portrayed in the mass media as a city characterised by particularly high levels of delinquency, which in hegemonic media discourses is linked to notions of race and the category of "immigrants", in a context where a relatively high

proportion of the city's inhabitants were born outside of Sweden. According to Schclarek Mulinari, these media discourses can be seen in the light of growing political forces in the public debate wishing to undermine positive connotations of "multicultural society" and having an anti-refugee agenda. From that perspective, Malmö is represented as a border city, impregnated with antisemitism coming from abroad, through the arrival of migrants embodying "multiculturalism".

Apart from targeting Middle Easterners (and/or Muslims/Arabs) as the embodiment of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, the discursive criminalisation of Middle Easterners has implications for the portrayal of Sweden as a nation. In this discourse, the struggle against antisemitism is constructed as an intrinsic Swedish value. That is to say, Sweden is understood as a society where the phenomenon of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism is primarily coming *from abroad* rather than *from within*, but also that it is a nation that is inherently *against* antisemitism. One example of this was visible in the quote above by the Prime Minister, when he declared that "antisemitism is not okay in Sweden", a notion that was replicated also in other newspaper articles.[21] In that sense, Sweden appears as "raceless" (El-Tayeb 2011) as far as antisemitism is concerned, but also that "Swedes" are created as a "fictive ethnicity", to speak with Balibar (1991), characterised by its alleged lack of and even opposition to anti-Jewish racism. In this discourse, then, the absence of racism against Jews and opposition against antisemitism appears as a distinctive marker of "Swedishness", in contrast to the figure of the Muslim or Oriental "Other".

## Racialisation of Jews as a floating signifier

In addition to the criminalisation of the "Oriental Other" as the main antisemitic threat in Sweden, the empirical material shows that the media discourse on antisemitism also conveys a process of racialisation of Jews in Sweden. Analysing this material, I suggest that while Muslims/Middle Easterners as a collective were discursively constructed as an embodiment of antisemitism within this media discourse, Jews as a collective functioned in this material as a "floating signifier" (Hall [1997] 2021), which was attributed certain characteristics in relation to Sweden as a "racialised community" (Sharma 2015). Often, the category of Jews was discursively constructed as a

21 This was further emphasised in the fall of 2019, when the Prime Minister in an interview argued that antisemitism was "un-Swedish" (Orrenius Oct. 30, 2019).

necessity for the preservation of liberal democracy and the integrity of the Swedish nation, something that paradoxically meant that it was located outside of or in a subordinate position to the nation.

After the antisemitic events in Malmö and Gothenburg in December 2017, Adam Cwejman, political columnist in the regional newspaper *Göteborgs-Posten*, wrote an article about the Jewish community in Gothenburg. According to Cwejman, the arrival of Jews ("the first non-Christian immigrants in Sweden") in nineteenth-century Gothenburg constituted an example of successful integration, through which, as he described it, Jews found a refuge from continental antisemitism and also contributed to the economic and cultural development of the city. Cwejman contrasted this with today's newly arrived ("non-Christian") immigrants, whose "integration", he claimed, is less successful, and who moreover constitute an antisemitic threat against the Jewish inhabitants of Gothenburg. Cwejman therefore concluded:

> Jews in Sweden are currently like a canary in a coalmine: they constitute the litmus test of whether Sweden can function as a multicultural country. Because the biggest threat against Swedish Jews is not the odious Nazis (they are always present anyway), but people belonging to other minority groups in the country, having immigrated with hatred against Jews. (Cwejman Dec. 19, 2017)

The quote illustrates what I have shown above, that Middle Eastern migrants are accused of importing antisemitism into a Sweden in which autochthonous antisemitism is only a marginal or seemingly irrelevant phenomenon. Once again, Middle Easterners are constructed as a worse threat against Jews in Sweden than neo-Nazis. But more than that, the description of Jews as "a canary in a coalmine" (an animal), a picture indicating that when Jews are being threatened (the "canary" stops singing), "multicultural society" (the coalmine) is running out of oxygen and must be abandoned, is illustrative of how Jews are instrumentalised in this media discourse as *an indicator of the functioning of liberal democracy*, as well as of "multicultural society". That is, the degree of exposure of Jews to Muslim antisemitism (but not to Nazi antisemitism) is argued to correlate to the degree to which Sweden, understood as a liberal and multicultural society, can continue to be seen in that way. If anti-Jewish attacks from "Middle Easterners" were to increase, this would—following the logic of the quote above—imply that the multicultural project must be abandoned. What the implication of this would be for those racialised as Middle Easterners—as well as for Jews—in Sweden was not discussed in the article.

The instrumentalisation of Jews as an indicator of the state of liberal society was sometimes also being described in apocalyptic terms, to highlight a

supposed crisis of Swedish society, as in this quote by political columnist Per T. Ohlsson in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*:

> Now, with a surge of hatred against Jews, it is time to pay attention to the special character of antisemitism as the thermometer of the body of democratic society. When temperature rises, immunity decreases. Because antisemitism has only been permitted to take hold of sick societies. (Ohlsson Dec. 17, 2017)

In this quote, through the image of a "thermometer of the body of democratic society", the discursive function of the category of Jews in Swedish society is to illustrate the degree of crisis in which Sweden currently finds itself. Antisemitism is argued to be not primarily a problem for Jews, but for modern, liberal society at large. If (Muslim) antisemitism were "permitted" to grow, i.e. if the "temperature" of the sick body of society continues to increase, this would thus imply a serious threat against the Swedish nation, comparable to the demise of the Habsburgian empire after World War I, which Ohlsson gave as an example later in the article. In that sense, the struggle against antisemitism appears as pivotal to the preservation of the nation. Remarkably, this perspective thus decentres the human suffering of those exposed to antisemitism—Jews in Sweden—and instead locates the well-being of the Swedish nation at the centre of the argument.

In relation to the depiction of Jews as an instrument for measuring the "health" of liberal democracy and for the preservation of the Swedish nation, it was often emphasised in the media discourse that antisemitism was a threat *not only* against Jews. For example, after the antisemitic events in December 2017 the cultural editor of the *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* claimed that the task of Swedish society was "to vaccinate broadly against antisemitism. […] Because history teaches us that no group can feel safe when a minority is attacked" (Chukri Dec. 14, 2017). On other occasions, politicians have stated that they regard "antisemitism [not] as a threat only against the Jewish community, but as a threat against all citizens and the state itself" (Olsson and Roth Aug. 19, 2014). While this emphasis—widespread in Swedish public discourse—that antisemitism is also a threat against non-Jews (either against other minoritised groups or a vague "everyone") could indeed be read as a benevolent urge for non-Jews to show solidarity with a group exposed to racial hatred, there is also something deeply unsettling about the repetitious claim that antisemitism concerns *not only* Jews, especially when this emphasis does imply an understanding of anti-Jewish racism not as a structural phenomenon proper to Swedish society, but rather as an "import" from abroad, through the arrival of migrants from the Middle East. In relation to the depiction of Jews as an instrument for preserving liberal democracy and the integrity of the Swedish

nation, I suggest that the often-repeated claim in Sweden that antisemitism is a threat against "everyone" in fact downplays Jewish suffering, and indicates that antisemitism is taken seriously *not primarily* because it is a threat against Jews, but because it is understood as a threat against the Swedish nation by the Oriental "Other". By this line of reasoning, I don't wish to downplay the importance of showing solidarity with groups exposed to racial hatred, but rather to point out the fact that the assertion that "everyone" is under threat due to antisemitism is historically misleading and simply not true. Even in times of genocide, there are groups of people whose safety is not threatened. In addition to that, in the current discursive climate, the emphasis that "everyone" should be concerned by antisemitism seems rather to reinforce a process of criminalisation of Middle Easterners/Arabs/Muslims as antisemites, rather than to invite a structural critique of the racist features of Swedish society.

The very need to emphasise that antisemitism concerns society as a whole seems to locate the category of Jews as not belonging to the nation. If Jews were discursively and unequivocally located as "belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011) to the Swedish nation, the manifestations of this form of racism alone would suffice to be considered politically important. However, the repetitious claim by politicians and journalists that antisemitism concerns "all citizens" and that "it cannot be justified" can be interpreted as an illustration that racial hatred against Jews is in itself not worrisome enough, but can only be taken seriously because it allegedly threatens "everyone". Thus, it appears as if Jewish pain is taken seriously in this media discourse only due to its position in terms of protecting national values and security, but not because of the human suffering itself.

In other words, it seems like the expressions condemning antisemitism in the empirical material, through attributing it to the "Oriental Other" and through the creation of Sweden as a country where antisemitism primarily comes from "elsewhere", to a certain degree reproduced anti-Jewish racism, in the sense that these expressions located the category of Jews either outside of or in a subordinate position to the Swedish nation, and that they reduced the safety and well-being of Jews to a matter of protecting liberal democracy. By racialising the category of Jews as a necessity for the preservation of liberal democracy, and by focusing on antisemitism as a threat against the Swedish nation ("everyone"), the suffering of those exposed to racism was attributed less importance in relative terms. It should be noted that this form of racialisation differed widely from the depictions of Muslims/Middle Easterners as the embodiment of antisemitism and as an Oriental threat against Sweden. This indicates that the discursive location of the category of Jews in Swedish society is ambivalent, since it was represented as both in need of

protection, as well as something useful for society—a utilitarian approach which necessarily implies a certain degree of dehumanisation.

The representations outlined here can be understood as inscribed within a larger societal discourse on "Swedish exceptionalism" (Schierup and Ålund 2011; Ruth 1984), where Sweden is portrayed as a progressive and non-chauvinistic country with outstanding social and moral qualities, in alleged contrast to the rest of the world. This is in turn reinforced by the location of the category of Jews in relation to an alleged Middle Eastern threat. It is noteworthy how this understanding of anti-Jewish racism resembles homonationalist and femonationalist discourses, in which the racial/Oriental "Other" is seen as the embodiment of homophobia and patriarchy, respectively, whereas "the West" is portrayed as enlightened, progressive, gay-friendly and gender-equal (Puar 2007; Farris 2017), as discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to "Swedish exceptionalism". Similarly, in these media discussions, the Middle Eastern "Other" was portrayed as antisemitic, in contrast to a "tolerant" (Goldberg 2004) Sweden protective of its Jewish population. One can also see this in relation to the notion of "philosemitism"—a sense of (exaggerated) love for what is Jewish (Kushner and Valman 2004), but which also implies a generalisation and stereotyping of Jews as a collective, just as antisemitism does (Samuels 2021). Inspired by the concept of "state philosemitism" (Lentin 2020), i.e. the notion that the Western state's discursive "care" for the Jewish "Other" upholds anti-Muslim hegemonic narratives (discussed in Chapter 2), which I would prefer to rephrase as "national philosemitism", the category of Jews was used in these media discourses to construct Sweden and "Swedishness" as a "racialised community" (Sharma 2015). This racialised community was portrayed as progressive, in sharp contrast to the Oriental "Other", which was attributed qualities of being barbaric, violent and dangerous, but where the suffering of those exposed to anti-Jewish racism was decentred in favour of a discourse about the importance of preserving the integrity of the nation.

## Circumcision and Swedish Protestant secularism

Moving on from the public discussion on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, we now turn to the decision by the liberal Centre Party to promote a ban on non-medical male circumcision on minors, and how this relates to a racialisation of the category of Jews in Sweden. In September 2019, the congress of the Centre Party passed a motion arguing for the prohibition of male circumcision on

minors for non-medical reasons.[22] Although similar motions had been presented to previous party congresses (TT Sept. 28, 2019b), this was the first time such a motion was passed by a congress.[23]

In the motion, the main argument was that the state must protect children from "maltreatment, neglect and mismanagement" ("*misshandel, misskötsel, vanskötsel*"), of which male circumcision was argued to be an example. Furthermore, male circumcision was equated with female genital mutilation. Since this is prohibited by Swedish legislation, it was argued in the motion that from a perspective of gender equality legislation should be gender-neutral and hence also include a ban on male circumcision on minors when this is not medically motivated. The motion was written by an individual party member, but it got support from the provincial party organisation, reiterating the argument that the legislation should be equal for both sexes.[24]

The board of the Centre Party, however, suggested that the congress should reject the motion, using several arguments against it. First of all, the party board stated the following in its reply to the motion:

> Circumcision is a millennial tradition, first and foremost connected to Judaism and Islam. Although circumcision has existed in Sweden only for the past one hundred years, it is very common around the world. For example, in the United States 90 percent of all boys are circumcised. (Centerpartiet 2019, 22)

Here, circumcision was presented as part of a global culture that is foreign to Sweden, where it has been practised "only" for one hundred years. Given that Jews have resided legally in Sweden since the late eighteenth century, the accuracy of the argument can be questioned. However, the argument that this global cultural practice is not something threatening is reinforced by the argument that it is widespread in the United States, another Western

22 Important to note is that I am not making the argument that opposition to non-medical male circumcision on minors is anti-Jewish (or anti-Muslim) per se; indeed, there are some Jewish voices arguing against this practice (Greenberg 2017). My argument is rather that the debate on a state-sanctioned ban on male circumcision offers the opportunity to analyse racialisation of the category of Jews and how this relates to notions of "Swedishness".

23 It should be noted that, among the political parties in the Swedish parliament, the Left Party and the Sweden Democrats are also in favour of a ban on non-medical male circumcision on minors. However, there haven't been any major public discussions in recent years about the policies of these parties as far as male circumcision is concerned.

24 The individual motion, the support from the provincial party organisation, and the reply from the party board were all retrieved on December 15, 2019 from https://www.centerpartiet.se/download/18.43703c0a16cb8895dd23a8a/1568635057183/Kommitté%203_Vård%20och%20omsorg_Motioner_PS%20yttranden%202019.pdf

democracy. Moreover, the party board also stated that male circumcision must be understood as a completely different phenomenon from female genital mutilation, and that the Centre Party defends both the right of the individual to their own body, as well as freedom of religion. Finally, it was argued that a ban on male circumcision would lead to it being practised clandestinely.

At the congress, the motion got support from the Youth Organisation of the Centre Party. One of the most ardent proponents of the ban was a board member of the youth party organisation, who also was interviewed in several media outlets after the congress decided to pass the motion. Her argumentation appears to have been important for the decision of the party congress, and is therefore relevant to analyse. In her speech, she presented herself as someone with personal experience of "honour-related violence and oppression", and that it was this experience that induced her to take a strong position on the issue of male circumcision (SVT Sept. 28, 2019). Among other things, she stated:

> Just because you have given birth to a child, that doesn't mean you can do anything you want to that child. Parents have freedom of religion, yes, but that freedom of religion cannot violate the child's freedom of religion. […] Parents cannot brand [*brännmärka*] their religious convictions on a child, who cannot say anything. Ban circumcision on small boys!

The motion to ban male circumcision was passed by the party congress, despite opposition from the party board. In declarations to mass media afterwards, a spokesperson for the party board expressed that he was worried that this could lead people to believe that the Centre Party was antisemitic and anti-Muslim, but he emphasised that the party congress had made its decision "strictly from the perspective of children's rights" (*Nyheterna* Sept. 28, 2019). In response to the congress decision, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities (Judiska Centralrådet), argued that if the suggested ban were to become national legislation it would make Jewish life in Sweden impossible, and that many Jews would choose to migrate from Sweden. Moreover, he pointed out that no other Western democracy has legislation banning male circumcision for non-medical reasons (or what in Jewish tradition is referred to as *brit milah*) (TT Sept. 28, 2019a).

When asked by mass media if she didn't believe that the decision to ban male circumcision would be perceived as antisemitic and anti-Muslim, the representative from the Centre Party's youth organisation rejected that argument, stating:

> That is exactly the same argument that was used during the debate on honour-related violence and oppression. When the question of honour-related violence

> and oppression was raised, people said: "No, we can't talk about this; it will marginalise groups." But this is about the rights of individuals, and when it comes to the rights of individuals we must speak of the existing problems and the existing rights. It's exactly the same principle there, it is exactly the same principle in this question." (*Nyheterna* Sept. 28, 2019).

It is important to analyse the decision to promote a ban on male circumcision both in relation to secularism, which could then be seen as a form of "Enlightenment antisemitism" (Dencik 2020), as well as in relation to gender. The understanding of religion that was present among those in favour of the ban seemed to be rooted in a Protestant understanding of religion as a question of individual "faith", rather than an embodied practice, implying a strong dichotomous differentiation between body and soul, as well as between public and private (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013). In this Protestant-secular worldview, it is only the religion of non-Christians, in this case Jews and Muslims, that can constitute a problem for a secular modern society simultaneously guaranteeing both freedom of religion and children's right to their bodies. Following this understanding of religious and individual rights, it seems that Protestant Christianity will always appear as the least problematic religion from the point of view of secularism, since it is a religious tradition rooted in strong separation between body and soul, acts and faith, public and private.[25]

In relation to gender, it is noteworthy that in the debate Sweden was portrayed as a secular, gender-equal country, protective of the rights of children. The comparison between circumcision and so-called "honour-related violence" draws on a narrative in the Nordic countries where migrants are thought to embody forms of "honour-related violence", which discursively is located in opposition to Nordic forms of alleged national gender equality (Alinia 2020). Finnish scholar of racism Suvi Keskinen (2009) has also shown how the mass media has been central in initiating and opening up space for discussions on how migrants allegedly constitute a societal problem, not least in relation to so-called "Nordic values" in discussions surrounding "forced marriages". According to Keskinen, these mass-media debates build on an Orientalist discursive structure between West and East, in which the latter is

25 However, it should be noted that in the public debate following upon the congress of the Centre Party, some ecclesiastic voices were raised, worried that in the long run a ban on non-medical male circumcision on minors could also pave the way for a ban on children's baptisms, with the argument of protecting children's rights (Öjermo Oct 8, 2019). Currently no party in the Swedish parliament holds the opinion that children's baptisms should be banned.

portrayed as patriarchal and barbaric, in sharp contrast to notions of Western (or Nordic) gender equality. Moreover, Keskinen relates these mass-media discussions to notions of national homogeneity that exist in the Nordic countries (Gullestad 2002), notions which make it hard to acknowledge the existence of both gendered and racial hierarchies in these countries.

As far as gender is concerned in relation to its intersections with secularisms and religion in this debate, it should be noted that the notion of "Swedish gender equality" (Alexandra Ålund and Alinia 2011) was at the core of the argument that male circumcision is similar both to female genital mutilation and to "honour-related violence and oppression". In that way, by locating "gender equality" within the realm of Swedish secularism, male circumcision—practised by Jews and Muslims alike—was in turn located within the realm of patriarchal practices that in the Swedish contemporary public debate are often attributed to Islam (but seldom to Judaism). The juxtaposition of "honour-based violence" and male circumcision therefore implied a juxtaposition of Islam and Judaism, both discursively categorised as non-Swedish (despite the recognition that it has been practised in Sweden "for the past one hundred years"). Furthermore, the analogy that is made between the repressed Muslim woman and the figure of the "small boy" (either Jewish or Muslim), both in the hands of repressive and overly religious parents, could be interpreted as an example of feminisation of the Jewish "Other" (Boyarin 1997). It could also be interpreted through the concept of "caring racism" (D. Mulinari and Neergaard 2013) in the sense that it was through the argument of "caring" for the "small boys" exposed to dogmatically religious parents that the argument for a ban on circumcision was carried forward.

However, the fact that the board of the Centre Party argued so strongly against the motion, and moreover that the chair of the party, Annie Lööf, told mass media that the party's group in the Swedish parliament "won't be writing parliamentary motions about this" (TT Sept. 28, 2019b), indicates that the issue of male circumcision hits a sensitive spot in the boundary-making of the Swedish racial regime, and about its degree of exclusionary practices of the non-white and/or non-Protestant and non-secular. This was further emphasised by the fact that the next party congress, in September 2021, withdrew the decision to prohibit non-medical male circumcision on minors (Mellesmo Sept. 24, 2021), following a suggestion from the party board.

# Conclusion: between protection and subordination

In the material concerning media discourses on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, the image of "Swedishness" that emerges is that of a Swedish exceptionalism that is progressive, non-racist against Jews, and even protective of Jews when these are threatened by Middle Easterners/Muslims. On the one hand, this creates the image of a "Swedishness" that is open, warm-hearted and inclusive of the category of Jews. At the same time, I have argued that the repeated claims that antisemitism must be fought because it constitutes a threat against Swedish society and liberal democracy nuances this image and in a paradoxical manner locates Jews in an inferior position vis-à-vis "Swedishness", since it decentres the human suffering that is the consequence of anti-Jewish racism, and instead places the integrity of the nation at the core of the issue. Thus, paradoxically, the category of Jews is partly racialised as non-Swedish through a discourse which ties notions of "Swedishness" to the struggle against antisemitism (coming from abroad) and the protection of Jews.

When it comes to the discussion in the Centre Party on banning non-medical male circumcision on minors, the image of "Swedishness" that appears is one that is progressive, secular, gender-equal and protective of the rights of those in a vulnerable situation, in this case children with parents defined as "religious". On the one hand, one could argue that this "Swedishness" implies a hostility against Jewish cultural practices, since this secularism is founded upon a Protestant worldview, making a sharp distinction between body and faith, and implying that cultural practices involving the body (circumcision) are viewed with suspicion. It therefore seems that forms of "Swedishness" are inclusive of the category of Jews when Jews are under threat from Muslims/Middle Easterners, but exclusive of the category of Jews when Jews practise Jewish traditions. From this perspective, a lived Jewishness appears as more problematic for the notion of a Swedish progressive and secular nation than a Jewishness that is under violent threat. On the other hand, the fact that the decision of the Centre Party to promote a ban on circumcision was met with so much condemnation not only from outside the party, but also from the party board, and that the party congress two years later decided to reject the motion, is indicative of the ambiguous position that the category of Jews is conferred in the Swedish racial regime.

From this material it therefore seems that what is at play as far as the location of the category of Jews in the analysed material is concerned is something similar to the triangular relations that are present in the phenomena of femonationalism and homonationalism. In these cases, Sweden or "Swedishness" is presented as protective of the rights of women and gays,

against the alleged threat of the Oriental "Other". In the case of what I call "national philosemitism", Sweden or "Swedishness" is in a similar way presented as protective of the rights of Jews, against the alleged threat of the same Oriental "Other". In that respect, it is the same image that is recycled in various instances, reinforcing the image of a "Swedish exceptionalism" with outstandingly moral and social qualities, progressive and caring for minoritised groups. At the same time, the discussion on male circumcision demonstrates the fragility of this discursive image, since Jewish cultural practices can also be interpreted as standing in contradiction to the secular modernity that Sweden is thought to embody. To the extent this is thought to be the case, the category of Jews is located in a position more akin to that of Muslims, therefore appearing as "non-Swedish", which renders comparisons between male circumcision, female genital mutilation and alleged patriarchal oppression of Muslim women possible. This ambiguity of the location of the category of Jews in the Swedish racial regime will be explored further throughout the remaining empirical chapters.

# Chapter 6: "Swedishness" and the Jewish "Other" in *Fanny and Alexander*

## Introduction

Having explored processes of racialisation of Jews in discursive constructions of "Swedishness" in the public debate, we now turn to an analysis of racialisation of the category of Jews as expressed in a well-known Swedish cultural artefact: Ingmar Bergman's film *Fanny and Alexander* (Bergman 1982a). As already mentioned in Chapter 4, ethnologist Barbro Klein (2003) has remarked that Sweden is a country where it is possible to show *Fanny and Alexander* without the audience grasping that one of its most central figures is a Jew. Klein explains this as a result of what she argues is a general and longstanding silence and lack of interest from the majority population concerning Jewish life and culture in Sweden.

In this chapter, I take Klein's remark as a point of entry to explore features of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime. By focusing on the representation of the Jewish characters in the film, their relation to the non-Jewish characters, and their function for the overall plot, I analyse how different constructions of "Swedishness" open up for diverse expressions of anti-Jewish racism and the construction of the category of Jews. As a cultural artefact, *Fanny and Alexander* offers the opportunity to explore how racism and constructions of Swedishness can be expressed within the realm of artistic imagination. This exploration therefore opens up for seeing other features of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime, through chains of association and phantasies. That being said, the analysis is inspired by critical discourse analysis with special focus on the tension between representation and power, and connects to the analysis in the previous chapter and to the theoretical framework. The tradition of visual analysis (Rose 2007), while relevant for an exploration of images acting upon film narratives, falls outside the scope of this analysis. In the chapters

dedicated to the in-depth interviews, we will see how the discourse analysis and film analysis bridge, resemble and yet are different from lived experiences of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime.

## Race in Swedish film

The characters identified as Jewish in Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* from 1982 can be seen in light of a tradition of Swedish film production portraying people from racialised, minoritised groups. Writing explicitly about the representation of Jews, but also of other ethnic minorities, film theorist Rochelle Wright (2005) has argued that Swedish film production up until the 1960s was full of ethnic stereotypes. This included racial stereotyping of Jews, but also of Roma people, the Sámi and Finns. As far as cinematographic representation of Jews is concerned, Swedish film in the 1930s only rarely verbally denoted characters as Jewish, according to Wright, but reverted to stereotypical phenotypical traits to construct the Jewish "Other": "dark, curly hair; a large, hooked nose; flamboyant gestures and body language; a strong accent; or a typical Jewish name", not least in the genre of *Pilsnerfilm* (Wright 2005, 56).[26] Moreover, Jews in Swedish films during this time, such as *Kära släkten* (*Dear Relatives*) and *Söderkåkar* (*Shanty Town*), typically appeared as moneylenders or pawnbrokers, and sometimes constituted a threat that needed to be eliminated to ensure the film's happy ending, Wright asserts. The kind of films that included this type of depiction of Jews was extremely popular in Sweden at the time and reached an audience in cinemas close to one million viewers (Wright 2005, 57).

During the Second World War, however, racist caricatures of Jews seem to have disappeared from Swedish film production, paving the way for portrayals of Jews as victims of Nazi persecution. While there were also some positive representations of the Roma in the years following the end of the War, Wright argues that until the 1960s Swedish film plots were generally structured around an "us against them" ideology, in which ethnic minority groups had the function to construct a common Swedish identity in opposition to those minorities (Wright 2005, 58). From the 1960s onwards, however, Swedish films have increasingly tried to encourage the audience to feel solidarity with ethnic minorities, including recently arrived refugees to Sweden, as well as

26 Swedish genre of farcical comedy from the 1930s, largely focusing on the intake of hard liquor and beer (from which it gets its name). The films were produced during a period of restricted-alcohol policy in Sweden.

Jews as victims of antisemitism (Wright 1998, 391-92). This resembles the argument put forward by sociologist Carina Tigervall (2005), who has explored the representation of the category of "the immigrant" (*invandraren*) in Swedish films from the 1970s to the early 2000s. In her material she found that the "immigrant" was portrayed in a paradoxical manner. On the one hand, they were often depicted as a "sympathetic" person—childlike, passionate, good-hearted—possibly reflecting a humanistic and sometimes antiracist agenda of the film-makers. On the other hand, they were also portrayed as fundamentally "different", in a way that opposed them to Swedishness in terms of constructions of culture, gender and race. Thus, according to Tigervall, Swedish films have produced a sympathetic image of "immigrants" through the use of positive stereotypes, but simultaneously reproduced notions of a fundamental difference between the categories of "Swedes" and "immigrants". In that sense, there are similarities between Tigervall's assertion that immigrants are often portrayed as sympathetic, yet different, and Wright's argument that Swedish film productions since the 1960s increasingly have encouraged the audience to feel solidarity with ethnic minorities, including Jews as victims of antisemitism.

## Previous analyses of *Fanny and Alexander*

When it comes to analyses of *Fanny and Alexander* in particular, Wright has paid attention to the representation of the Jewish characters in the film, observing that the character of Isak Jacobi bears stereotypical Jewish traits, and that Erland Josephson, the Swedish-Jewish actor who played the role, later expressed his disappointment in Ingmar Bergman for reproducing stereotypical notions of Jewishness (Wright 1998, 243). Wright has also argued that while the same character is portrayed as "not fully integrated", he is still "loved and appreciated" by the Swedish family in the film, and that in general "the Jewish characters are identified with the life-affirming, positive values of artistic creation, and of image and mystery" (Wright 1998, 246).

Other analyses of *Fanny and Alexander* have tended to focus on the personal development of the film's protagonist, the young boy Alexander. For example, Lynda Bundtzen (1987) has argued that *Fanny and Alexander* has the form of a *Bildungsroman* ("educational novel"), through which Alexander acquires personal maturity. Deploying a psychoanalytical gaze, she analyses the film as a portrayal of Alexander's oedipal struggle with his dead father or with several father figures. Diana Diamond (2007) has classified the film as a

*Künstlerroman* ("artist's novel"), arguing that it reflects Bergman's own journey toward artistic growth, and she links it to Bergman's autobiography (Haverty 1988) and his memoirs (Bergman 1988).

Some scholars have analysed the film from a gender perspective. For example, Marylin Blackwell has emphasised the patriarchal Lutheran tradition that is present in the film, linking this to Bergman's personal rebellion against his own father, who was a priest (Blackwell 1999, 1997). She has noted how the Jewish characters in the film are portrayed in a feminised or androgynous way, and that they are located as a positive contrast to Lutheran Christianity, which is represented in extremely negative tones. She has also remarked that one of the Jewish characters is an embodiment of transgression of sexual boundaries (Blackwell 1997). The same analysis has led Daniel Humphrey (2013) to regard the film as having a queer element, linking this to a longer tradition in Bergman's production. He has also remarked that both one of the Jewish and one of the non-Jewish characters can be read as queer. Other scholars have remarked on the homoerotic tension between Alexander and Ismael, the nephew of Isak (Hayes 1997; Wood 2013).

Also, it should be noted that there are actually three versions of *Fanny and Alexander*. First, there is the film manuscript (Bergman 1982b) that was considerably altered once it was brought to the screen. Then, there are two cinematographic versions of the film. One is a five-hour version that was broadcast on Swedish television in 1984 in the format of a mini-series consisting of four episodes. The other is a shorter, three-hour version, which premiered in Swedish cinemas just before Christmas in 1982 (Bergman, Donner, and Nykvist 2003). Since the latter is the version of *Fanny and Alexander* that repeatedly is broadcast on public Swedish TV, that is the one I focus on in this chapter.[27]

27 A few things could be said about antisemitism in light of Bergman's own life, since this is a discussion that has recurred a few times in Swedish public debate. After the publication of *Laterna magica*, Bergman's (1988) memoir, author Jan Myrdal questioned Bergman's alleged unawareness of Nazi Germany's antisemitic persecutions and genocide. In the late 1990s the same allegations were brought up by journalist Maria-Pia Boëthius (for an overview of this debate, see Steene 2005, 984). After Bergman's death in 2007, the debate surfaced once again in Swedish newspapers, with Boëthius and journalist Cordelia Edvardson questioning the public appraisal of Bergman's oeuvre, in light of his possible fascination with Hitler (Ohlin 2009). This was, however, refuted by journalist Cecilia Hagen, who argued that these allegations were exaggerated and that Bergman's memoir should be read as an artistic dramatisation of his life and not as a literal account of actual facts (Hagen 2007). While the Swedish public's relation to Bergman and to his possible antisemitic and Nazi past could indeed have been interesting to analyse in relation to the overall topic of this dissertation, this chapter, however, focuses neither on Bergman's biography, nor on the reception of his oeuvre, but is restricted to an analysis of *Fanny and Alexander*.

# Visual representations of the "Other"

The analysis of *Fanny and Alexander* has been inspired by the tradition of Black British cultural studies (Baker, Diawara, and Lindeborg 1996), and in particular the work of sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall. In "The Spectacle of the 'Other'", Hall (1997) discusses visual culture in relation to racism. Influenced by psychoanalytically orientated concepts, such as splitting, projection, phantasy and ambivalence, Hall explores the connection between representation, difference and power in racist society. Although Hall writes specifically about the representation of Black women and men, his text provides a frame for thinking about visual representation of non-white racial categories in white society in general (see also hooks 1992). According to Hall, "stereotyping" is central for the representation of racial difference, in the sense that it is a process which "reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'" (Hall 1997, 258). By representing racial categories through stereotypes, a binary opposition is created between the white Self and the racial "Other", which then are located in a hierarchical order, to the detriment of the latter. In this process, moreover, boundaries are created between the Self and the "Other", exaggerating and simplifying the differences between them. Pointing out that stereotyping only occurs in a context characterised by gross inequalities of power, Hall also argues that the function of stereotypical representation of racial difference is to maintain the social and symbolic order (ibid.).

Arguing, furthermore, that phantasies—including both desire and fear—are central in racist representations of the racial "Other", Hall observes how those racialised as non-white are trapped in a binary structure of representation. Through the example of representation of Black men, Hall remarks that both during the period of slavery and in today's racist society shaped by it, white men's phantasies have implied representations of Black men as simultaneously deprived of masculinity and as hyper-masculine. Hall argues that these representations reflect white men's fear and desire for Black men, respectively. According to Hall, this results in Black men still having to manoeuvre a binary logic of being represented as both childlike and oversexed at the same time (p. 263). Central to these racist representations of the racial "Other" are thus the simultaneous stereotypes of the "Other" as both weak and strong. Hall argues that the depiction of the Black man as childlike—an expression of notions of Black weakness—in reality reflects the white man's fear of the Black man; a fear to which the white man reacts by portraying the Black man as weak and thus as inferior to him. According to Hall, it is therefore important to analyse these simultaneous and ambivalent racist representations together as a whole, to understand how these phantasies are part of constructions of racial difference

(ibid.)—in other words, to explore representations of the racial "Other" and the making of racial difference, Hall asserts that it is necessary to understand that there are phantasies embedded in racial representations, some of which are not directly visible in the representation itself, but rather reflect racial phantasies circulating in society, which it might not be possible to express directly.

Hall's observations of the ways in which the making of racial difference works through ambivalent phantasies seem to resonate with analyses of anti-Jewish racist representations. As already discussed in the chapter on previous research, phantasies about Jewish wealth and power are common in anti-Jewish rhetoric. These phantasies often take the form of conspiracy theories, in which Jews are imagined to secretly govern the world. In the outline of previous research, we also saw how Jewish men have sometimes been portrayed as effeminate and weak, in opposition to images of white "Aryan" masculinities (Boyarin 1997). Through the framework provided by Hall, we can regard these contradictory depictions of Jews as both super-powerful as well as weak/effeminate as representations of racist phantasies of Jewish strength and weakness, respectively. According to Hall, then, these very different portrayals should therefore be analysed together, as part of a larger social reality, reflecting a white/"Aryan" fear and desire for the racial "Other". In our case, therefore, it becomes relevant to explore how stereotypical images of both Jewish strength and weakness are present in the racial representations of Jews in *Fanny and Alexander*.

## A tripartite division of racial-religious-gendered space

I analyse the plot of *Fanny and Alexander* as constituted by three distinct spaces through which the protagonist, the ten-year-old boy Alexander, travels, accompanied by his younger sister Fanny. Each of these spaces has a series of racial, religious and gendered features of its own, conveying a particular relationship between the film's Jewish and non-Jewish characters. In what follows, I will first give a short initial description of how I read these three racial-religious-gendered spaces, in order to give the reader who is unfamiliar with the film a sense of its storyline. Thereafter, I proceed to a more detailed analysis of how the Jewish characters are portrayed in each one of these identified spaces, the function of these characters for the overall development of the film, and how I analyse this in relation to racism and notions of "Swedishness".

The first space is the universe of the Ekdahl family, revolving around its matriarch and Alexander's grandmother, Helena. This is a bourgeois milieu in

Uppsala at the beginning of the twentieth century, portrayed, particularly through the Christmas celebrations at the beginning of the film, as a jovial, colourful and lavish space with plenty of servants, food and drink. It is characterised by an atmosphere that is almost burlesque, filled with laughter and sexual and scatological jokes. The women in this space are portrayed as strong, the men as weak, and extramarital affairs appear to be common. Several events of a Christian character are celebrated in this space: Christmas, a funeral, a wedding and a christening. This notwithstanding, there are no religious authorities or expressions of Christian morality in the family home. One film critic has regarded the Ekdahl home to be an expression of a "life-affirming, pagan Christianity" (R.S. Brown 2005), due to its humoristic and warm atmosphere. A close friend of Helena's, Isak Jacobi, a Jewish man wearing a kippah, is present at all these family gatherings.

After the death of Alexander's father Oscar, Alexander's mother Emelie decides to remarry bishop Edvard Vergerus. This leads to Alexander, together with his mother and sister, moving into the bishop's residence, constituting the second space of the film. This universe revolves around the male religious authority of the bishop, to whom the rest of the household—including his wife, mother, sister, aunts and female servants—submit, with the exception of Alexander. It is a rigid and ascetic space characterised by a "Lutheran patriarchy" (Bundtzen 1987), rules to obey, and strong dichotomies: truth-lie, darkness-light, dominance-submission. The bishop is portrayed as a sadist who keeps his wife and her children as prisoners, and who humiliates and canes Alexander when he tries to challenge the bishop's authority. The bishop and his sister are portrayed as explicitly antisemitic.

At the request of their grandmother, Fanny and Alexander are rescued from the episcopal residence by Isak Jacobi, who brings the children to his home and antique shop, which is the third space that Alexander travels through. This is represented as a mystic and magical space, where Isak lives with his adult nephews Aron and Ismael. This cabbalistic universe is partly presented as frightening and potentially dangerous but also as exciting to Alexander. It stimulates his curiosity and fantasy, and makes him ponder upon his relationship with God. The most intense scene is focused on Ismael, played by Finland Swedish actor Stina Ekblad, who has an androgynous or gender-fluid appearance, and is described as sick and dangerous. Overall, it is a space with homoerotic tensions, where categories seem to be fluid, and the boundaries between reality and phantasy, but also between subjects, have been dissolved. During Alexander's stay in the household, and as a consequence of Alexander's imagination and willpower, assisted by Ismael, the bishop dies in a fire at his residence. The bishop's death frees Alexander, his sister and their

mother from the legal bonds to the bishop's authority. Once free, they return home to the Ekdahl universe, resulting in a happy ending emphasised by the joyful celebration of the christening of two babies, newly born into the family.

## Isak as a guest of the Ekdahls

Within the Ekdahl universe, Isak Jacobi participates in all the festivities—often in a Christian frame—celebrated by the Ekdahls. However, his participation in these events implies a position of periphery. In the scenes from the emblematic Christmas celebrations at the beginning of the film, this becomes evident, since Isak is consistently placed at the margins or at the back in the scene when the family is gathered to listen to a reading of the Christmas gospel, and during the family's line dance through the rooms of the apartment. These details illustrate his position of an outsider, albeit a welcome one, in the Ekdahl family home.

Moreover, despite the welcoming and inviting atmosphere in the Ekdahl universe, there is also evidence of racism beneath the surface. In a scene between Helena's son Carl and his wife Lydia, Carl confesses that he is close to personal bankruptcy. Lydia then suggests that he go to "the Jew" to ask for money. Carl replies vehemently that he has already borrowed money from him and refers to that loan as "usury". This scene thus troubles the warm-hearted open atmosphere of the Ekdahl family, and shows the existence of antisemitic tropes in the midst of this universe.

On Christmas Eve, when the family has gone to bed, Isak and Helena remain awake, engaging in a one-sided conversation, in which Helena cries and laments the loss of her youth, while Isak patiently listens and comforts her. We get to know that the two used to be lovers but now have a platonic friendship. She later refers to her way of talking incessantly as "monologising, as Isak calls it"; and the portrayal of the conversation as one-sided, with Isak comforting Helena, is reminiscent of how people racialised as non-white have often been given the task of listening to the problems of people racialised as white (Appiah 1993; Bernardi 2007; hooks 1992). The conversation ends when Helena has to prepare herself for the Christmas Day morning service, and Isak returns to his home.

Thus, this central Jewish character in the film is portrayed as a welcome, yet somewhat marginal, guest in the Ekdahl universe. This is done both through his placement at the margins of the scenes, and is emphasised through the dialogue between Helena and Isak, in which he plays the part of listener, taking care of Helena's feelings of sorrow and melancholy. While it has often been highlighted

in previous research that Isak is welcome in the Ekdahl family, which then in turn would indicate an atmosphere inclusive of Jews (Wright 1998), this portrayal of Isak is reminiscent of the depiction of migrants as "sympathetic" yet "different", which Tigervall (2005) has argued characterises Swedish film production. In *Fanny and Alexander* Isak is indeed portrayed as a sympathetic character but also as different from the Jacobi universe. Through this difference, embodying something other than the Swedish Protestant secularism that the Ekdahl universe represents, he is portrayed as belonging elsewhere. In that way, he can be interpreted as not "truly belonging", in the words of Yuval-Davis (2011), to the form of "Swedishness" that the Ekdahls symbolise.

As far as gender is concerned, the weak masculinities of the Ekdahl universe (where the men have sexual and economic problems) are contrasted with the strong women, particularly the matriarch Helena, but also the sons' wives, as well as some of the female staff (Bundtzen 1987). These are portrayed as capable women, economically powerful and/or with a strong determination, organising their families and trying to prevent the men of the household from falling apart both economically and emotionally. Besides that, they engage in extramarital liaisons, and are thus depicted as both responsible and hedonistic. All this implies a portrayal of the Ekdahls as a matrilinear family, in sharp contrast to the bishop's household.

When it comes to gender and the portrayal of Isak, Blackwell (1999) has identified Isak Jacobi as an example of a feminised masculinity. He is not married, has no children, and, although he once had a love affair with Helena, this is no longer the case; nevertheless he is portrayed as very caring. While the notion of Jewish feminised masculinity is part of European racist history (Gilman 1993; Boyarin 1997), it is interesting that in the film this feminised masculinity renders Isak sympathetic in the eyes of the Ekdahl family, although it should be noted that the fact that Emelie turns to him when her children are in danger also means that he is attributed certain stereotypically masculine qualities, such as courage. The partly stereotypical reproduction of Jewishness is shown in a positive light, and portrayed as something that contributes favourably to the Ekdahls, not as anything threatening to their universe. Reminding ourselves of the strong connection between gender and race for the constructions of national belonging, as developed both by Yuval-Davis (1997) and McClintock (1995), I suggest that the asymmetries between the feminisation of Isak Jacobi (together with, as we shall see, the other Jewish character in the film) and the masculine authority of the bishop, but also of Alexander's coming of age, express a gendered aspect of the racialisation of the Jewish characters in the film. In that sense, feminisation and racialisation seem to be tightly knit together in the depiction of these characters in the film.

## Isak as the selfless saviour of Fanny and Alexander

Once Alexander, his sister and mother have moved to the episcopal residence, they are confronted by the harsh rules and ascetic lifestyle of the bishop. This is therefore portrayed as a very patriarchal space, in sharp contrast to the Ekdahl universe. What has been described as an oedipal struggle between Alexander and his new stepfather (Bundtzen 1987) develops, culminating in the bishop locking up the children while their mother is away. During a humiliating interrogation, Alexander is forced to ask the bishop for forgiveness for a lie/fantasy he has told, after which he is brutally caned by the bishop, in front of the other members of the household. Once Emelie comes back home and finds her maltreated son, Helena contacts Isak Jacobi for help to rescue the children from the bishop.

In order to rescue the children, Isak arrives at the bishop's residence on the excuse that he would like to buy a chest for his antique shop. He is first confronted by the bishop's sister, who treats him scornfully, makes antisemitic remarks, and is unwilling to let him meet her brother, until she realises Isak has brought a lot of money. Through the use of magic, Isak manages to hide the children in the chest that he is about to buy. The bishop, who senses that something wrong is happening, bursts out in an antisemitic tirade against Isak. However, once again through the use of magic, Isak manages to fool the bishop and smuggle the children to his home and antique shop.

From my perspective, this is a fascinating part of the film, opening up for multiple interpretations. Wright (2005) has remarked that this scene in particular is full of racial stereotypes of Jews, notably the theme of money and Isak's deployment of "cabbalistic magic" (Haverty 1988). First of all, I find it noteworthy that Isak's actions are pivotal to the rescue of Fanny and Alexander from their de facto prison in the bishop's residence. In that sense, Isak is portrayed as being necessary for the later return of the children to the Ekdahls, and for restoring the happy Swedish family atmosphere. Despite this, it is remarkable that Isak is never thanked by the Ekdahls; his deeds remain unacknowledged. At the end of the film, when the christening of two new-born Ekdahl children is celebrated, Isak is once again relegated to his customary marginal position as a friend/guest of the Ekdahl family. Indeed, throughout the film, Isak is portrayed as an active subject only in his capacity of rescuing Fanny and Alexander from the bishop's cruelty.

Secondly, the fact that the bishop and his sister engage in explicitly antisemitic behaviour toward Isak portrays ecclesiastical Protestantism as closely tied to expressions of antisemitism. This contrasts with the warm atmosphere of the bourgeois Protestant-secular Ekdahl space, where Isak is a

welcome guest, albeit relegated to a position of marginality. The secular-religious divide in the film, which some scholars (Bundtzen 1987; Blackwell 1997) have attributed to Bergman's resentment toward his own father, who was a priest, gives the image of Swedish Protestant secularism as a welcoming space for Jews in contrast to the overt antisemitism of the formal and ecclesiastic Protestantism as represented by the bishop's space. To a certain extent, this can be read in relation to research arguing for Christianity as a source of antisemitism, in opposition to secularism (Nicholls 1995), although other researchers have shown the continuity between Christian and secular antisemitic discourses (Hertzberg 1990; P. Birnbaum 2013). In the film, we have therefore two different representations of what can be seen as white "Swedishness": one that is religious and overtly antisemitic, and another that is Protestant-secular and welcoming of "difference", but where the Jewish characters are relegated to a position of marginality.

Thirdly, I would like to point out the selfless character of Isak's demeanour. By rescuing Fanny and Alexander, he exposes himself to the rampant and threatening racism of the bishop and his sister. Moreover, he runs a personal risk, since he engages in what could be interpreted as kidnapping. In a sense, Isak seems to be willing to sacrifice himself for the well-being of the Ekdahls. This notion of sacrifice is also mirrored in his name, the biblical Isak being the son that Abraham was ready to sacrifice in order to please God. This portrayal of Isak as selfless echoes many other depictions of the racial "Other" as a good-hearted saviour, rescuing the white protagonist, as analysed by scholars writing in a tradition of Black cultural studies (hooks 1992; Appiah 1993; Bernardi 2007; Hall 1997).

Reminding ourselves of Hall's (1997) argument about phantasies of the racial Other, we can see how Jews in *Fanny and Alexander* are simultaneously represented as both strong and weak. Isak Jacobi's deployment of "cabbalistic magic" to rescue the children is indeed an expression of phantasies of Jewish super-power. Although this is portrayed in a positive light, since it saves the protagonist from the evil bishop, it is nevertheless a reproduction of notions of Jews as superhumanly powerful, a notion that is present in racist propaganda. At the same time, however, the portrayal of Isak Jacobi as a case of feminised masculinity, as well as his self-sacrificing behaviour, can be seen as a racial phantasy of Jewish weakness, paralleling the phantasy of Jewish strength. If we agree with Hall that racial phantasies are an expression of both desire and fear, we can analyse the portrayal of Isak's strength through the deployment of magic as an expression of white desire for the Jewish "Other's" superhuman powers. Simultaneously, the white fear of these same powers would then find its expression in the feminisation of Isak Jacobi, depriving him of (masculine)

power. Through this combination of racial phantasies of Jewish strength and weakness, Isak Jacobi embodies a non-threatening "difference".

## The exotic Jacobi household

Once rescued from the bishop's residence, Fanny and Alexander are brought to the Jacobi household—an antique shop and the home of Isak and his two adult nephews Aron and Ismael, where the children are offered refuge. Some scholars have shown that the depiction of the Jewish characters and their "cabbalistic" household in the film reproduce "stereotypical traits" of Jews (Wright 2005; Blackwell 1997), and the "Shylockian" attributes of Isak have been underlined (Bundtzen 1987), although the film's "positive" portrayal of the Jewish characters has also been extolled (R.S. Brown 2005) and interpreted as a sign of "integration" into Swedish society (Blackwell 1997). The exotification of Jewishness includes the portrayal of the Jacobi home as a mystic, magical or "oriental" milieu that both frightens and excites Alexander, in a way that surpasses magical features in Alexander's gaze elsewhere in the film. It constructs the Jacobi household as "different" from the "sameness" (Gullestad 2002) of the Ekdahl universe. A key example of this is when Aron (played by Ingmar Bergman's son Mats Bergman) shows Alexander an Egyptian mummy, which breathes despite having been dead for millennia. This exotifying and orientalising portrayal of the Jewish characters in the film can be seen as building on a European racist tradition locating Jews, categorised as "non-Aryans", outside Western civilisation (Bernal 1991; Anidjar 2008).

The portrayal of the Jacobi space also underlines the feminisation of the Jewish characters. At the centre of this is Isak's nephew Ismael, who is "sick" and "dangerous" and therefore kept locked in a room. His name can be seen in connection to the biblical Ismael, Abraham's illegitimate son by his slave Hagar, who was forced into exile, thereby emphasising that Ismael is an outcast. The fact that the biblical Ismael is also considered to be the ancestor of the Arab people furthermore contributes to an orientalisation of the character (Humphrey 2013). Despite Alexander being forbidden to meet with Ismael, one night when Alexander cannot sleep Aron lets him into Ismael's room and leaves the two alone. Before he leaves, Aron kisses his brother on the lips, indicating a homoerotic—and maybe an incestuous and/or transgressive—ambiance. As already mentioned, Ismael is played by Finland Swedish actor Stina Ekblad, and appears as androgynous. The actor's Finland Swedish accent accentuates the exotic features of the character for a Swedish audience. The

homoerotic tension, the queerness of Ismael, and Alexander's erotic fascination with him, are counterposed to the heterosexual masculinity of the bishop in the previous space, which Alexander challenged, although both spaces are somehow intimidating. In other words, there is a strong gendered dichotomy created between religious Protestantism, heterosexual authority and Jewish, "oriental" queer mysticism, as also argued by Blackwell (1997). In relation to gender, it should also be noted that there is a complete absence of Jewish women in the film. This can be seen in light of similar depictions of the "Other" as a homogenous group, without space for internal differences, but also how racialised "Others" in particular are portrayed as male, and that "women" as a category are thought to be white, as analysed by Black feminists (Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith 1982).

Against the argument that the portrayal of the Jacobi space is "stereotypical", antisemitic and/or orientalist, Jarrod Hayes (1997) has suggested the portrayal of the Jacobi space be interpreted not as exotifying, but instead as a space of "permeability", where the distinction between Self and Other is blurred. This argument builds on a key passage during the encounter between Ismael and Alexander. Alexander is asked to write his name on a piece of paper, but when he reads aloud what he just has written, it appears that he has written Ismael's name instead of his own. Ismael then deduces that "maybe we are the same person", and says: "I erase myself; I flow into you." This fluidity and the fact that categories are contested and rendered unstable can be read as a portrayal of queerness, accentuated by the erotic features in the scene. However, the instability of categories is not carried out in an equal manner. It is Ismael who says that he "erases" himself and "protects" Alexander, not the other way around. In that sense, Ismael's wilful erasure of himself, his "permeability" with Alexander, can be interpreted as a form of submission vis-à-vis the film's protagonist. It echoes Isak's role in the film and reinforces the racial dynamic in the plot, where the Jewish characters exist for the sake of the non-Jewish characters. This racial pattern is recurrent throughout the film and relegates the Jewish characters to a position of sympathetic, yet self-sacrificing and self-erasing, figures.

In the same scene, Ismael also manages to read Alexander's mind and becomes aware of his desire to kill the bishop. Ismael convinces Alexander that it is possible for him to commit this murder through willpower. Intersected with this scene, we see parallel scenes in the bishop's residence, where Emelie drugs the bishop, after which the bishop's sister topples a paraffin lamp on her bedside table, catches fire, and then runs into the bishop's bedroom, who also catches fire. In the following scene, two police agents come to see Emelie, who is now back at the Ekdahls' home, to inform her about her husband's death.

In that sense, Ismael assists Alexander in what has been interpreted as an oedipal struggle (Bundtzen 1987) against the bishop. Thanks to Ismael's fluidity and "permeability", Alexander manages to use his own willpower to kill the sadist who has humiliated him, his mother and sister. Ismael can therefore be considered an auxiliary for Alexander's own coming of age and journey toward his masculinity. Thus, Ismael appears as necessary for Alexander, who, having fled from the bishop's sadism and travelled through the imaginative landscape of the Jacobi universe, wants to assert his own subjecthood and combat his antagonist. In that sense, Ismael here serves the purpose of preparing the ground for Alexander's revenge, defying the cruel masculinity that has made him suffer, but also to enact a masculinity of his own, very different from the castrated masculinities of the other Ekdahl men and from the feminised Jewish characters. Retracing our steps to Hall (1997), Ismael's self-erasure can be understood as a phantasy of Jewish weakness. Just as Hall argues that all white fear of and desire for Blacks cannot be shown and must therefore be expressed in other ways, the portrayal of the Jewish characters in *Fanny and Alexander* as figuratively weak can also be interpreted as an expression of white fear and desire for racist phantasies about Jewish strength, in a way that renders the Jewish characters sympathetic.

## Conclusion: either violent racism or benevolent marginalisation?

The Jewish characters in *Fanny and Alexander* are portrayed as "sympathetic" yet "different", seemingly mirroring a longer pattern in the Swedish film industry's depiction of racial minorities. Despite being pivotal to the preservation of the Ekdahl family, they are nevertheless restrained to positions of marginality in relation to them. Jewishness is a welcome element in the Ekdahl family home, but not more than as a guest standing silent at Christian celebrations and at the very end of the line dance on Christmas Eve. When Alexander's and Fanny's return to their home is succeeded by a happy family celebration at the end of the film, Isak Jacobi's position as welcome, yet marginal, remains unchanged. Thus, by constructing the Jewish characters as "different" from the white Swedish sameness (Gullestad 2002) of the Ekdahl universe, they are also located as not properly "belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011). Moreover, through the depiction of the Jacobi space as oriental and exotic, the Jewish characters are represented as not "autochthonous" to the portrayal of Sweden as a "racialised community" (Sharma 2015) in the film.

Furthermore, the film offers two very different representations of white "Swedishness", with disparate relations to the film's Jewish characters. On one side we have the religious, patriarchal and sadistic bishop's household, which is overly antisemitic. On the other, we have the Ekdahls' universe, which is Protestant-secular, warm-hearted, welcoming, non-patriarchal and "tolerant" of "difference". This differs from what we saw in Chapter 5, where Muslims were criminalised as antisemites, and "Swedishness" was discursively produced as protective of the category of Jews. In Bergman's film, it is instead dogmatic Protestantism that is threatful to Isak Jacobi, whereas the Protestant-secular Ekdahl space welcomes him. However, with the above in mind, I read the Ekdahl space as although certainly more benevolent than the violent racism of the bishop, problematic as well, since it locates the Jewish characters in a position of "subordinate inclusion" (D. Mulinari and Lundqvist 2017) vis-à-vis white Protestant-secular "Swedishness". From this perspective, the only option the film's Jewish characters have when they relate to non-Jewish "Swedishness" is that of either violent racism or benevolent marginalisation.

I have argued that the portrayal of the Jewish characters as simultaneously feminine, queer, mystical, and with superhuman powers can be seen as mirroring white racist phantasies about the "Other's" alleged powers and weaknesses (Hall 1997). Further, I suggest that the cost of being portrayed as "sympathetic" is that the Jewish characters are instead depicted as self-sacrificing. It is through selfless actions, risking their own security (Isak) and erasing themselves (Ismael), that they become pivotal to the plot and ensure the well-being of Fanny and Alexander, restoring the happiness of the Protestant-secular Ekdahl family. To a certain degree, this is reminiscent of the argument presented in Chapter 5, where solidarity was expressed with the category of Jews when anti-Jewish racism could be seen as embodied by the category of Muslims, while Jewishness expressed through cultural practices (*brit milah*/male circumcision) was seen as problematic for the nation. In Bergman's film, the Jewish characters are not portrayed as problematic or threatening, but their portrayal as sympathetic is linked to their self-sacrificing demeanour. Both at the level of racialising discourses in Swedish society and in Bergman's film, there thus seems to be a certain connection between Jewish erasure (either through external violence, self-sacrifice or marginalisation) and the rendering of the category of Jews as sympathetic and/or worthy of protection.

In the remaining empirical chapters, dedicated to the analysis of the in-depth interviews, I will continue the exploration of processes of racialisation of the category of Jews, and see how these are entangled with the changing structures of the Swedish racial regime.

# Chapter 7: Anti-Jewish racism as (in)visibility

## Introduction: "Swedes know nothing about us"

Having explored how processes of racialisation of Jews are present in public debates in Sweden, and in Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* as an example of a cultural artefact, we now turn to the in-depth interviews. The purpose of these chapters is to explore anti-Jewish racism and the Swedish racial regime at large, through the analysis of Jewish subjectivities in Sweden as expressed in the interview material.

The analysis of the interviews has been organised into four chapters, covering various themes that evolved from the interviews. In this first chapter, a central topic is the notion of a historical change that was present in many of the accounts among interviewees born during the first couple of decades after the Holocaust, particularly in their reflections of how the nature of racism against Jews in Sweden had changed during the span of their life. A pivotal aspect in relation to this change is the demand for "sameness" in the Swedish racial regime, and how national belonging is enacted through this "sameness". This in turn relates to what some interviewees experienced as forms of invisibility in Swedish society, and is connected both to strategies of adaptation to Protestant-secular society as well as the relation between anti-Jewish racism and other forms of racism in the Swedish racial regime.

An aspect of this perceived invisibility became obvious during my fieldwork. In October 2018, a key interviewee brought me to Bajit, a Jewish cultural centre in central Stockholm, a visit I also mentioned in Chapter 4. After a lunch at the restaurant at Bajit, the interviewee introduced me to a few of her acquaintances and explained that I was a PhD student from Lund University. When asked about the topic of my research, I replied that I was interested in antisemitism, Jewish identities and their relation to the Swedish nation. At this answer, a woman, who I guessed was in her sixties, exclaimed: "Relation to the Swedish nation?! There is none! Swedes know nothing about us!" I was

surprised by the answer, and unsure how to interpret both the alleged absence of a Swedish-Jewish relation, and the fact that the woman, by her choice of phrasing, located herself outside "Swedishness". I have reflected upon this scene several times during the work with this thesis. The woman's exclamation that "Swedes know nothing about us!", as well as many interviewees' expression of a perceived lack of knowledge, interest and support from majoritarian society, obliged me to ponder upon the complexities of racism in the Swedish context as far as visibility and room for difference are concerned. I noticed that many interviewees born in the first decades after the Shoah shared views similar to that of the woman at Bajit. According to them, majoritarian Swedish society lacked knowledge about Jewish life in Sweden, was not interested in it, and did not show any support for the Jewish community, which was frustrating to many interviewees. At the same time, many of them also expressed their opinion that the situation for Jews in Sweden "had been better before".

## "There was almost no antisemitism"

In most cases, I would begin an interview by asking how the interviewee's Jewish identity had evolved over their life span. Through this question, I learnt about many expressions of Jewish identity and experiences of racism during the interviewees' childhood and adolescence. However, several interviewees, who grew up during the first few decades after the Holocaust, declared that it had been fairly unproblematic to grow up as a Jewish child in Sweden in this time period. Many also told me that they had faced hardly any form of racism in their childhood, something that aligns with previous interview studies in Sweden where Jewish interviewees said they lack or have limited experiences of antisemitism (Nylund Skog 2006). For example, one informant, who grew up in a town in western Sweden as a child of Hungarian Holocaust survivors, told me the following about his childhood:

> It was fairly unproblematic. Once in a while I got to hear "bloody Jew" from someone I was in a fight with. But I didn't wear any glasses, and I was rather good at school, so what else could they say? Then they had to use this "bloody Jew". I have heard from others who got very… well, on a few occasions I got angry too and then I threw something, a stone or something, at their head. So I have fought for it too, but it wasn't anything…. For the most part, it was rather innocent.

In this case, the interviewee understood racist invectives such as "bloody Jew" as normalised boyish acts, comparable to other, non-racist, invectives used in school settings. While this interviewee expressed a high degree of worry about contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, he made a sharp contrast with the 1950s and 1960s, which he described as almost an idyllic period in which anti-Jewish racism was largely absent. Among some of the interviewees, this was a common understanding of Sweden in the aftermath of World War II, and was often contrasted to today's Sweden, where anti-Jewish racism was described as growing. A woman who grew up in Gothenburg in the 1950s and 1960s shared a positive memory from her childhood:

> When I was at elementary school, I used to live close to school, so I went home to have lunch, because I didn't eat the food in the canteen. And that wasn't weird at all. And I went to church for the end of the school year. We were in Sweden, we felt secure about our Jewish identity, and we were obviously a part of majoritarian society. If the end of the school year took place in a church, then it took place in a church. I liked Christmas a lot, and I didn't have to believe in Jesus just because he was in the nativity scene. But I learnt what it meant. And the psalms. We had morning celebrations. I still know the psalms.
>
> *Interviewer: It sounds very idyllic?*
>
> But it was! The times were different. I and my brother were the only ones who were dark. And there was one guy who had Italian parents; they had come here as labour migrants. That was the only non-Swedish element in the entire school. And I was a picturesque element, as I usually say.

In this account, the interviewee gives the image of Sweden during her childhood and adolescence as an ethnically relatively homogenous society, where her position as a dark-haired Jewish girl among her white Swedish Christian peers didn't cause problems. It is noteworthy that she described herself as different from her peers due both to her religious-cultural practices as well as her physical appearance. Her difference came across as "picturesque", and in the interview she explained to me that the exotifying image was sometimes filled with erotic undertones. In her memory, she never experienced this differentiation in a negative way. Further, she portrayed the strong Christian elements in Swedish public schools in this era—end of school year celebrations in church, Christmas celebrations, and daily morning gatherings with psalm-singing—as unproblematic, and as something that she and her family easily adapted to without this causing any problem for their

Jewish identity. It is noteworthy that when I concluded that her description was idyllic, she emphasised that this was indeed her memory of her upbringing.

Later in the interview, she contrasted this with contemporary discussions in Sweden, in which it has been questioned whether it is suitable for public schools to celebrate the end of the school year in church. When she described how she had to go home to have lunch, since the school canteen didn't serve kosher food, I asked whether this wasn't experienced as a difficulty, as she and her brother were the only ones who would go home to have lunch and that this must have singled them out. She replied that she didn't remember it as anything negative. On the contrary, she added that sometimes other kids would follow her home for lunch, if they didn't like the food served in the canteen on a particular day. In this interview and in some others, the interviewees conveyed a very positive image of Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s. Although they were categorised as "different" from their non-Jewish peers, they didn't seem to think that this excluded them or located them at an inferior position vis-à-vis non-Jewish Swedes. At the same time, it was obvious that they and their families worked actively to adapt themselves to the Protestant-secular norms of Swedish society, and that there didn't seem to be many options to do otherwise.

Many of the interviewees who were born during the first two decades after World War II, some of them as children of Holocaust survivors, would tell me about what they understood as a strong commitment among their parents to "adapt to Swedish society", during their childhood and adolescence. Sometimes, they said, their parents strove very hard to "integrate" into Swedish society. While they also told me there was a relative lack of anti-Jewish racism during this time, they simultaneously conveyed that Swedish society of the period was ethnically homogenous, with strong social imperatives to adapt to the cultural-religious norms of the majority population. One interviewee, when asked what it was like to grow up in Malmö in the 1950s and 1960s, summarised the attitude of his parents as "one was supposed to be proud to be Jewish, but one shouldn't speak too much about it". When asked to elaborate, he answered:

> So, there was pride, but also carefulness. And that comes from the position of being a minority. One has learnt to be careful; one doesn't talk too much about it. And if your employer wants you to work on Saturdays, then you work on Saturdays. And you go to school on Saturdays. And then you go to the synagogue some other day. And I think all Jewish boys of my age went to school on Saturdays. I cannot remember anyone who didn't. Maybe there was someone, but I don't remember. And it was kind of part of this "we adapt to this country". Everyone was a Social Democrat. Everyone.

In this excerpt, the informant explained the ambivalence that he identified among his parents' generation in the first decades following World War II, combining a pride in their Jewish identity with what he labelled as "carefulness", which translated into not displaying their Jewishness openly. He framed this demeanour as a willingness to "adapt to this country", by accepting the Protestant-secular norms of Swedish society, including working and going to school on Saturdays, and being off work or school on Sundays. Partly, his emphasis that "everyone" in the Jewish community in Malmö where he grew up voted for the Social Democratic party, hegemonic in Sweden during that time, could be interpreted as mirroring this willingness to "adapt". What stands out in this account is that the interviewee seemed to express a mixture of nostalgia of what was portrayed as a harmonious past without conflicts—different from today's Sweden, where migrants and people racialised as non-Swedish are constantly blamed for "not adapting to Sweden"—but also an acknowledgement that fear was a driving force behind this alleged harmony. He explicitly told me that he believed that many Jews in Sweden in the aftermath of the Shoah had been afraid that history would repeat itself, and that it had therefore been important for the many to try to prevent this by "adapting to Sweden" and refraining from displaying their religiosity in the public sphere. In all the interviews with people who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, Sweden was portrayed as a society with a very strong pressure to adapt to what can be conceptualised as Swedish "sameness" (Gullestad 2002), something that seemed to have formed the upbringing of many interviewees, as well as their relationship to notions both of Swedishness and Jewishness. Often, this "sameness" was expressed as Protestant-secular norms, to which the interviewees and their families adapted.

What can be framed as a "strategy of adaptation", but also the low degree of racism that many interviewees told me they had experienced, could be seen in light of the low number of people who, according to the interviewees, did deviate publicly from Swedish Protestant-secular norms. The woman who grew up in Gothenburg, and who used to go home to have lunch as a school pupil, made the following reflection when I asked her to elaborate on this experience:

> There were just a few of us. It didn't really matter for the school if we went home for lunch because we had another tradition. It wasn't worth talking about. But today, if you have a school with 2,000 pupils and 1,000 of them do not eat the Swedish-Swedish food that is offered, then that obviously requires the school to take another position, to make other decisions and to offer other things, so to speak. Times are different. Completely different. That is also provocative for majoritarian society, because you have to question yourself.

> […] Swedes love travelling abroad to visit churches and temples and eat different kinds of food, but when it comes here and it is around your corner, it is not so funny any more.

The interviewee described a situation of "tolerance" (Goldberg 2004; Balibar 1991)—or maybe acceptance that she understood as relating to the relatively small number who were perceived as deviating from Swedish ethnic, religious and cultural norms—toward "difference". From this perspective, those who were categorised as "different" in racial-cultural-religious terms were so few that they did not constitute a "provocation" for majoritarian society, in the words of the interviewee. In the interview, she also conveyed a critique of "Swedes", by which I understood white, non-Jewish, Protestant-secular Swedes, and their alleged cultural narrowmindedness, which implied that they would feel threatened by public manifestations of cultural diversity when these occurred in Sweden.

Thus, for this interviewee and several others born during the first couple of decades after the Holocaust, historical change appears as a central topic to understand experiences of antisemitism. In these accounts, there was often a binary opposition between notions of a happy past and a much more problematic present. Nevertheless, the accounts from "the past" contained several descriptions of adaptations to "sameness", of moments of exclusion, racial slurs, and of being singled out as different.

## Racialisation, difference and national belonging

Besides accounts of what was described as fairly unproblematic adaptations by the interviewees' families to expectations of sameness, I was also told stories from this period in which the interviewees were more explicitly differentiated by the majority population. Sometimes the interviewees were not sure whether these cases of differentiation had positive, neutral or negative connotations. The following quote is an example of this type of differentiation:

> There are these subtle things, people knowing very quickly that you are Jewish, despite… I had recently moved to [*name of town in mid-Sweden*], I got a job there, we had a new-born baby and then we got an apartment in this newly constructed area, a bit outside of town. Everybody there had recently moved in. And then a friend of ours came to visit us, but he didn't know what street number was ours, so he went to see the janitor and asked for us. "Yes, she is a Jew, right?" the janitor replied. "Well, I don't know," my friend said. But then

> he recalled that I was born in [*European city*] and had moved to Sweden in the late 1930s, so he added, "Well, yes, maybe she is." "Ah, yes, they live at this street number," the janitor said. We had just moved in! I think it almost a mystery that something like this can happen! [*Laughs*] It wasn't the smallest of towns, but still the rumour had spread. This was 1959.
>
> *Interviewer: And why was it like that?*
>
> I don't know. Well, still in 1959… yes, there was some immigration: we had people from former Yugoslavia, first and foremost Finland, Italians coming, at least to Gothenburg. […] But it seems like there was still something exotic about it, you know. Because you can't say that my physical appearance is typically Jewish—I don't know what that would be, but you can't say I've got it. My dad had dark-blond hair and blue eyes. It is very hard to tell. There are these strange things that I can't really explain. It was so obvious that, for them, a Jewess had moved into "our neighbourhood", you know. But I can't really tell you if this janitor harboured negative feelings about it, because the story doesn't say. But just this thing that they knew, it is so enigmatic to me. ´

In this story, the interviewee emphasised that her differentiation as a Jew in Sweden at the end of the 1950s seemed like "a mystery" and was "enigmatic" to her. In the interview situation, she seemed to be trying to understand why she had been differentiated, despite not looking "Jewish" ("you can't say that my physical appearance is typically Jewish"). Although she didn't know whether to interpret the memory as a form of exclusion ("I can't really tell you if this janitor harboured negative feelings"), the interviewee was clearly bothered by the way she had been categorised as a Jew, since she couldn't understand the reason for this categorisation. This account gives the image of a semi-urban Sweden where everything that did not fit into Swedish "sameness" was regarded as extremely "exotic" and worthy of gossip ("the rumour had spread"), mirrored in other interviewees' accounts of a rather homogenous and somewhat provincial Sweden.

In parallel with the interviewees' memories of Sweden during a time of limited ethnic heterogeneity, in which some interviewees described that they had been categorised as "different" from notions of Swedish "sameness" but didn't necessarily remember this as something negative, I also learnt of more violent forms of differentiation of Jews. One interviewee, whose father had grown up in Gothenburg in the 1930s, told me the following when I asked him about his fear of antisemitism:

> You know, my dad was forced out of German class at school. The teacher in junior high simply said: "[*surname*] leaves the room! We don't teach Jewish

> boys here." This was in Gothenburg. I think similar things happened at various places. And that doesn't leave anyone. That pain is still there, I think.

This short quote highlights the interviewee's transgenerational transference of trauma (Wiseman and Barber 2008), due to his father's childhood experiences of racism. Although the interviewee didn't elaborate any further on this episode, the quote transmits a sense of solitariness, and the feeling that there was no other teacher, presumably without racist attitudes, who would defend the interviewee's father at a Swedish public school in the 1930s. I interpret the lines "[T]hat doesn't leave anyone. That pain is still there, I think" as referring to the interviewee's feelings of pain due to the racist exclusion that was forced upon his father in a societal context with few possibilities to challenge Swedish racism.

While the quote above refers to pre-Holocaust anti-Jewish racism, I was also told about experiences of explicit forms of exclusion in the 1950s and 1960s, which other interviewees regarded to be an idyllic period for Jews in Sweden. For example, one interviewee, who grew up in what she described as a "very blond, petit-bourgeois area" on the outskirts of Stockholm in the 1960s, told me that she had been repeatedly bullied at school due to her "strange name" and for being one of the few "non-blond" children in the neighbourhood. She also remarked that her sister, who had the same family name but a blonder hair tone, was not an object of bullying. Often in the interview she would come back to her feeling of being differentiated in Sweden for the simple fact that she wasn't blonde:

> I realise I have mentioned this already three times now, but if you were born at the beginning of the 1960s, Sweden was so blond. I have this anecdote… When I defended my doctoral dissertation at the end of the 1990s, my sister came to the defence, and so did a bunch of my Jewish friends. When a former student of mine saw them, she exclaimed: "Oh, you have so many sisters!" [*Pause*] Well…

In this quote, the normative "blondness" of Swedish society appears in a parodic form when the interviewee's acquaintance assumed her friends to be family members, since they all deviated from the norm of blondness. Following this, Swedish "sameness" appears not only as a set of cultural-religious norms rooted in a Protestant-secular worldview, regarded to be "universal" in character, but is also expressed in terms of phenotypical traits. In the case of this interviewee, her non-blonde hair was one of the ways that she deviated from this sameness, and she connected this to the childhood trauma of being bullied at school. These remarks about blond (and sometimes

straight) hair in relation to "Swedishness", but also on whether they or their family members "looked Jewish", which many interviewees made, complicate the image of a Sweden where Jews for the most part are able to "pass as white" (Nylund Skog 2006). Instead, it gives the image of a racial regime, at least in the 1950s and 1960s, with very narrow notions of "Swedishness" and "national belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011), not only in terms of cultural-religious norms (Protestant secularism), but also as far as physical appearance is concerned.

Often, experiences of violent racial differentiation during this time period were described by interviewees as something that abruptly intervened in a setting not otherwise dominated by violent forms of racialisation. One interviewee, who was born in the 1950s and grew up in a town in eastern Sweden, told the following two stories from his adolescence and youth:

> I must say that I have experienced relatively few cases of antisemitism. There might have been small things in Swedish society… The first time I experienced something that could be interpreted as antisemitism, or maybe rather as xenophobia, was some time after high school when I moved to Stockholm, where I lived and worked for a year and a half. One late night I took the subway, it was rather empty, and then I heard this drunk person saying, "Go home to your fucking country!" And then it took me quite a while before I understood. "What, you are talking to me? What!?" [*Laughs*] I didn't understand anything. I mean, there were not many immigrants, but still there was this person then who in some way… I just remember being so surprised. I was born in Sweden and I have lived here and no one has ever questioned that. There used to be more of a curiosity about my Jewish background: "What does it mean? What do Jews believe in?", and that was something positive.

> I lived in [*name of town*] when I was an adolescent. This is a bit funny: when I was in 8th grade, they put on this theatrical play *Fiddler on the Roof*. It was quite a new play at that time—I think they had performed it in only a few other places in Sweden—but we were among the first to put on the play. So, they had this ad in town, looking for two small dark-haired boys who could be extras in the play. [*Laughs*] I can tell you that the competition wasn't that hard. [*Laughs*] I got the job. There were not that many dark-haired kids in [*name of town*] at the end of the Sixties. [*Laugher*] But as I said, I was fairly old when I heard it for the first time and I was just surprised, more than anything else. I was surprised and laughed at it. I just thought this drunk person was so ridiculous [*Laughs*] But I guess this is something in the direction of antisemitism, although I just thought it was inoffensive and just ridiculous.

In the first part of this quote, the interviewee expressed his astonishment at being interpellated as non-Swedish ("Go home to your fucking country") when

he was in his twenties, something he said had never happened to him before, and he stated that he had always felt included, in what Sharma (2015) would describe as the national racialised community, during his childhood and adolescence ("no one has ever questioned that"). Maybe the perceived inoffensiveness of the situation was a reflection of his own surprise and because it was uttered by a drunkard, although the situation could also have been interpreted as threatening, given that he was sitting in "a rather empty" subway train. This episode could possibly be understood through the concept of "latent antisemitism" (Fein 1987a), which many scholars of antisemitism in Sweden refer to (Sarri Krantz 2018; Bachner 1999; Anders Wigerfelt and Wigerfelt 2016), denoting anti-Jewish racism as tacitly part of society but only occasionally surging to the surface.

However, the interviewee also added that he had the experience while growing up in a context where "there were not many immigrants", of people being curious about his Jewishness, something that he perceived as positive. Maybe this arguably benevolent form of differentiation was also present in the second half of the quote, where the informant, in reference to *Fiddler on the Roof*, contended that "there were not that many dark-haired kids in [*name of town*] at the end of the Sixties", which made it possible for him to get the role as an extra in the theatrical play quite easily, as he described it. His continuous laughter throughout his account of this memory added to the depiction of Sweden as a rather homogenous and somewhat ridiculously provincial country, where dark-haired boys were very uncommon in middle-sized towns. The importance attributed to his looks regarding how others perceived him as different recalls Sharma's (2015) argument about how phenotypical traits are part of the construction of the "autochthonous" of the racialised community.

In contrast to this absurd and humoristic depiction of Swedish provincialism, I was also told of more sinister experiences of this same provincialism. The following refers to the beginning of the 1960s:

> Once we were travelling on our boat along the Dalsland canal, and then we got to a spot where we had to pass through a lock. But they had closed the lock. It was very frustrating. It was due to the Midsummer holiday. So I jumped out of the boat and went to this lock-keeper and asked him, "When do you think you'll open the lock again?" "Actually," he replied, "we Swedes are on holiday now." And I don't understand! I didn't wear a Star of David; I look the way I do. How the hell could he…? I mean, I haven't had any accent since I was six years old! Oh, by the way, now that I think of it, maybe he had seen the driver of the boat, my husband at the time, who was Spanish. Maybe he had seen him, because he was very dark. "We Swedes…"

In this quote, the interviewee was astonished by the lock-keeper's categorisation of her as non-Swedish in the context of a Midsummer celebration—a national holiday with strong connotations to notions of "Swedishness". Once again, the informant was troubled by her own inability to explain why she was categorised not only as different but, in this case, also as non-Swedish, despite her not wearing Jewish symbols, nor looking "typically Jewish", nor speaking Swedish with a foreign accent. While telling me this, she realised that the racism expressed by the lock-keeper might have been intended to target her Spanish husband, which then spilt over onto the interviewee. Her own confusion here is interesting, and can be understood as mirroring a Swedish racial regime, after the arrival of migrants from Yugoslavia and Italy, where racism was directed against both Jews and Southern Europeans.

Thus, the image I got from the interviews about the racial dynamics in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s was that Sweden at this time was perceived to be a rather provincial country and relatively homogenous in ethnic, cultural and even phenotypical terms, and governed by a strong social pressure to adapt to societal and cultural norms. In some cases, this led to forms of violent differentiation between the interviewees. At the same time, however, many interviewees regarded this to be a time period of "almost no antisemitism" and where it was understood to be relatively unproblematic to grow up as a Jew. That said, there seem to have been few instances in which Swedish cultural norms were actually challenged, given the relatively small size not only of the Jewish population in Sweden, but in general also of groups racialised as something other than Swedish and/or white, although some interviewees made comparisons between racialisation of Jews and racialisation of migrant groups from other European countries at the time.

In that sense, the interviews give the image of a Sweden where Jews seem to have been "accepted" or "tolerated", but at the cost of a certain Jewish "invisibility", i.e. that public displays of Jewishness or forms of "difference" from "Swedish sameness" were avoided or handled with caution. In the US context, different from Sweden's in many ways, historian Eric L. Goldstein (2006) uses the term "price of whiteness" to designate what he argues have been the problematic features of inclusion of Jews into US whiteness. In the Swedish case, I think the ambiguity I have described above can be captured by the notion of "subordinated inclusion", a concept that has been used by sociologists Diana Mulinari and Åsa Lundqvist (2017) to describe the situation for migrant women in Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s in a context of racialised labour exploitation. For them, subordinated inclusion refers to a situation of relative inclusion of migrant women into the Swedish welfare state, but in a

subordinated position vis-à-vis white workers. I use the concept of subordinated inclusion in relation to my material to grasp experiences of relatively low levels of overt racial differentiation but at the price of having to adapt to Protestant-secular norms and of being relatively discreet about one's deviation from Swedish "sameness". Through this form of Jewish subordinated inclusion in Sweden, Jews seem to have been "tolerated" in a way, to speak with Balibar (1991) and Goldberg (2004), that has not altered the racial underpinnings of universalist notions of "Swedishness", to which groups racialised as non-white have to assimilate (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Thereby, Jewish subordinated inclusion captures both positive accounts of how many remembered it to have been relatively unproblematic to grow up as a Jew in the 1950s and 1960s in Sweden, as well as the societal norms they and their families had to adapt to in order not to challenge Swedish "sameness" and thereby risk being perceived as problematic for Swedish society.

## Racialisation despite adaptation

Going back to the exclamation "Swedes know nothing about us!" that I was met with at Bajit, the perceived lack of knowledge about, interest in and support for the Jewish community in Sweden can be seen in the light of the subordinated inclusion of Jews in Sweden that appeared in my interviewees' accounts. Related to the strategy of "adapting" to Swedish societal norms which many interviewees told me their families had deployed, one interviewee expressed the following thoughts when I asked her how she understood the persistence of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, despite the emphasis in the public debate on the need to fight it:

> You know what I think? I think… I mean, all that is true, of course, but I think it is scary because the differences between the minority and the majority are so minimal in this case. And the minority has already done so many attempts at adaptation. And then there is this pure hatred, which is at the core of antisemitism. I think it is so weird and I think it is scary. It is like this stupid person from the Right who said, "You cannot be exposed to antisemitism if you assimilate," and that is the most stupid thing I have ever heard. I mean, look at the Bonnier family. What more should they do?! They got baptised 150 years ago, they have bishops in their family, and they don't do anything but eat pork! What more should they do?! And nevertheless… There is something about being a symbol of something that doesn't correspond to anything in your personality. There is something with this eternal hatred.

In this excerpt, the interviewee pointed out that the efforts at "adaptation" made by the Jewish population in Sweden, which she also explained were mirrored in the case of her father, occurred in a context that she defined as one of "minimal differences" between the Jewish minority and the non-Jewish white population majority. The emphasis on this pursued adaptation was paired with a feeling of fear, since she argued that this strategy had not succeeded in achieving the situation of safety that it was supposed to deliver. Instead, the interviewee told me about the persistence of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden. Both for her and for many other interviewees, this produced a feeling that Jews in Sweden live under a permanent racist threat. For example, many interviewees told me that they sometimes considered emigrating, fearing that the situation in Sweden (and elsewhere in Europe) would deteriorate, and that levels of racism against Jews would increase.

In the quote above, the Bonnier family, well-known in Sweden for owning several important media companies, serves as a symbol of this strategy of adaptation. In a slightly comical tone ("they don't do anything but eat pork!"), their adaptation to Swedish Protestant-secular norms was emphasised by the interviewee, but also the fact that despite this they are continuously targeted in anti-Jewish discourses in Sweden.[28] The informant made sense of this by portraying the Jewish community as an object of "eternal hatred" (Wistrich 1992). It is noteworthy that this understanding of an adaptation strategy in Sweden as "failed" possibly differs from a Jewish-American context, where scholars have argued that Jews have become "white" (Brodkin 1998; Goldstein 2006). However, in contrast to this interpretation of the US context, many of the people I interviewed underlined the arduous work of the Jewish population to adapt to Swedish society, but that anti-Jewish racism persisted despite these efforts, as well as what they perceived as a general Swedish incomprehension relating to the Jews in Sweden. This in turn was often contrasted with their perception of the situation for the Jewish community in other countries, not least in the United States, where they argued that being Jewish was much easier than in Sweden.

In relation to stories of adaptation, an interviewee born in the 1970s and living in Malmö had a different kind of experience. Her Jewish grandfather's family had migrated from Eastern Europe to southern Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century, but she herself had a low degree of Jewish identification. She described the Jewish part of her family history as largely

28 For example, in 2016 a Member of Parliament on behalf of the Sweden Democrats wanted to limit ownership over mass media among so-called "ethnic groups", and explicitly mentioned the Bonnier family (Jeppsson Oct. 5, 2016).

being affected by a strong fear of antisemitism. This had resulted in a will to adapt to Swedish cultural-religious norms, and a reluctance to carry on with Jewish traditions in her family. Moreover, while the interviewee was growing up, her mother had been very vague about her family history, which according to the interviewee was a reflection of the mother's fear of antisemitism. It wasn't until the interviewee was a teenager that it became completely clear to her that part of her family actually was Jewish. But despite this interviewee's low degree of Jewish identification, and the lack of Jewish traditions in her family, she told me about the strong emotions she had experienced when she went to the synagogue in Malmö for the first time on a work-related visit:

> I was invited to a commemoration of the Shoah in the synagogue. I had never been there before. And when I entered the synagogue, this sounds kind of strange, but I almost felt some sort of affinity, a connection, although it isn't there. Somehow the knowledge that my larger family, well, that there is an affinity there for them. And somehow there is that for me as well. But, of course, all of us search to be part of something, and you can do that in many different ways. But it would be exciting to explore that, now in hindsight. I never thought about that growing up, but now as an adult I do.
>
> *Interviewer: It sounds like you were overwhelmed?*
>
> Yes, a bit, yes. There was this atmosphere there. Like a tradition has been built and my family has their small part of that tradition. It was the same feeling when I read this book, which I think was narrated in a Jewish tradition. I read it and I thought, because it was about Ukraine, "Oh, was it like this? Was it this crazy? These rabbis and everything?" [*Laughs*]

The amazement that this interviewee experienced on her first visit to the synagogue, and also her incipient interest in Jewish cultural history as an adult, contrasted sharply with the silence surrounding her family's own Jewish legacy, which had resulted in herself knowing very little about her family history. Possibly, this silence and lack of knowledge were a result of the strong need and/or will that her grandfather and mother had felt to adapt to Protestant-secular norms, and which also had led the interviewee herself to be discreet about her Jewish legacy up until recently. While she emphasised that she hadn't had any personal experiences of racism, her own and her family's silence about their Jewish legacy can be interpreted as an effect of Swedish anti-Jewish racism.

Another interviewee, a man born in the 1950s and living in Stockholm, had a very strong Jewish identification, and told me vividly about his daily morning visits to the Orthodox synagogue in the neighbourhood of Södermalm.

However, when asked about his childhood, he became evasive and it was hard for me to get a picture of what his life had been like growing up. Eventually in the interview it became clear to me that he had adopted his strong Jewish identity as an adult. This, together with a few comments that he made en passant, led me to interpret the vagueness surrounding his childhood as an expression of a feeling of shame for his parents not having publicly displayed a strong Jewish identity when he grew up, and that he had to conquer that by himself as an adult. In my interpretation, therefore, his parents' will to adapt to Swedish cultural-religious norms in the 1950s and 1960s was something that he felt troubled about, which made it hard for him to tell me in detail about what it had been like to grow up as a Jewish boy in Stockholm at that time.

Going back to the topic of the persistence of anti-Jewish racism in Swedish society, several interviewees told me of their feeling of frustration that Jews are subjected to racism despite what seems to be a strong effort by many to adapt to Swedish cultural-religious norms. For example, an interviewee who described himself as having a strong antiracist identity commented on the phenomenon of present-day racism against Jews in the following way:

> I think that many Jews believe that this shouldn't be happening to us, because we have lived here for such a long time and we have integrated, but then it is still there: antisemitism, violence, threats and such things. So, I think it is a bit like that… I heard a radio programme and someone said: "It is so horrible that people tell us to go home." And then there was this writer who replied, "Yes, but that happens to a lot of people all the time, not only Jews." There is this expectation that this shouldn't be happening to us any more. And personally, I think… I understand that antisemitism is there and that it is a problem and a threat. I don't know how to put it. But I think that if I am part of a group which to a smaller or larger extent has something in common with other groups exposed to racism, then that is the way it is. I don't think there is any solution to this now. I don't think it is so strange that antisemitism is still there, or that it is insane that antisemitism is there, or that this person said this and that. I don't get surprised, I don't think it is so shocking, although it is horrible when it hits people—that is fucked up. But I don't think it is hard to understand and accept that this is the way it is, and that there is this threat.

In this quote, the interviewee highlighted that anti-Jewish racism is one among many European racisms and that its persistence, although abhorrent, isn't surprising. However, he also asserted that there is an understanding among many in Sweden of, as he interpreted it, anti-Jewish racism as being a more surprising or shocking form of racism, due both to the fact that Jews have lived in Sweden for a long time, as well as the strenuous attempts of "integration" that the Jewish community in Sweden has made. This argument also speaks to

the observation made by the previous interviewee who stated that there are only "minimal differences" between the Jewish minority and the majority population in Sweden, due to Jewish efforts to adapt to Swedish Protestant-secular norms.

Going back to the perception among many interviewees regarding the relative "invisibility" of Jewish life in Sweden, one interviewee expressed his worries concerning the future of Jewish life in Sweden, not least in light of recent violent threats against Jewish institutions. I asked what support he felt from society in general concerning the situation of Jews in Sweden:

> The support is weak. I think it is really due to a lack of knowledge. I don't think Swedes know so much… People might know about what Judaism is, but they don't know much about Jews, there is a lot of prejudice, or people don't care so much. Sweden is a very a-religious country, and for Jews, although a majority of Jews are not religious, religion is still an important factor within Judaism. And as I perceive it, it is hard for the common Swede to grasp things about religion, or tradition or something more diffuse, something superior, that such things would be important. In Sweden, it's so "down to earth", it is about here and now… people don't launch into thoughts about things that are not… but that has great importance within the Jewish tradition! And I believe there is a large lack of understanding for this. I think most people in Sweden don't care about these things about Jews and Judaism, then there are a few people who are very anti-Jewish and severely antisemitic, and there is one group which is positive, but most people don't care. I don't sense there is huge support for or commitment to the Jewish group.

This interviewee repeated several times that most people in Sweden simply "don't care" about Jewish life or anti-Jewish racism. Partly, he attributed this to a general lack of knowledge of Judaism or Jewish traditions in Swedish society. But he also contended that this indifference or uninterest was due to Swedish secularism, and that most people in Sweden in his view don't have the interest or even the ability to discuss spiritual matters, something that he said is of importance in the Jewish tradition. But what mostly captured my interest in this account was the sense of abandonment that he expressed, and the profound sadness, due to what he experienced as an indifference from Swedish society vis-à-vis Jewish experiences and fear of anti-Jewish racism. Sometimes this sadness, both in this and in a few other interviews, came across as a certain despair, not least when the future of Jewish life in Sweden was being discussed.

Thus, it seems to me that among many of the interviewees there was a sense of frustration regarding the persistence of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, and this frustration became accentuated in light of the efforts that many Jewish

families have made to adapt to Protestant-secular norms governing Swedish society, and to be relatively discreet with their Jewishness, which prevented Swedish "sameness" from being challenged. The fact that racism against Jews in Sweden persists despite these efforts, and combined with the long history of European anti-Jewish racism, not least the Shoah, seemed to give rise to feelings of great sorrow among many of the interviewees. The fear for the future that many interviewees, but not all, expressed in light of various anti-Jewish attacks in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe is thereby part of a larger racial dynamic characterised by expressions of Jewish subordinated inclusion into the Swedish nation, in which this subordination seems to have led to a situation where both racism persists and where the white non-Jewish majority population was perceived by the interviewees as lacking knowledge, interest and support for the Jewish population in Sweden.

## Migration from the Global South and changing anti-Jewish racism

Although several interviewees who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s described Sweden during their childhood and adolescence as an ethnically relatively homogenous country, where their Jewishness stood out in terms of both cultural traditions as well as physical appearance, this seems to have changed with migration to Sweden from the Global South, which started roughly in the 1970s. The following two quotes are examples of how these changes were expressed in the interviews, with their tensions and contradictions. They were uttered by a man born in Poland at the beginning of the 1950s as the child of Holocaust survivors, who migrated to Stockholm together with his family after the antisemitic so-called March events in Poland in 1968. During the interview, the interviewee displayed a very low degree of Jewish identification, let alone religious identification—he seemed to mirror himself in his portrayal of his father, who according to him "didn't want his identity to be defined by Hitler"—and stated that he had "almost no experiences at all" of racism in Sweden. When I asked him to still tell me about the few experiences he did have, he answered with the following:

> Well, my experience of racism in Sweden… I worked as a ticket-seller in the subway, some time back at the beginning of the 1970s. First of all, I had relatively long, black hair. And this was before the great extra-European immigration occurred, so I was… my physical appearance was rather foreign.

> And then I used to hear "you bloody black skull" [*din jävla svartskalle*]. I was at the central station—many people passed by. I mean, when five people every day say "you bloody black skull", it becomes normal. So I was completely numb. Then one day there was this guy who stood outside this glass cage where I was sitting and he stared at me for quite some time, and then he started saying "bloody Jew". And I didn't react. And then he looked at me and asked, "Are you Jewish?" [*Laughs*] He got unsure when he noticed that I didn't react much. And then once, also at the beginning of the 1970s, I went to a disco with a couple of guys who were Polish Jews too. And then we were… there was this giant guy who was very threatening and called us Jews and so on. But those were the only experiences.

Later in the interview, when the informant expressed worries about anti-Jewish racism among refugees in today's Sweden, and I asked him if he could share any personal experiences of this, he replied:

> No. No. It is not part of my everyday life. I don't expect to find it. But it is there, as I said. I mean, if I walk along a street in Stockholm, no one knows that I am a Jew. But I would think three times before I strolled around in [the Malmö neighbourhood of] Rosengård wearing a kippah. And, of course, it is unpleasant that it is like that.

There are several things that are important to highlight from these two excerpts. First, the interviewee's painful account of racism at his workplace on a daily basis, conveyed through racist slurs uttered by white Swedish passers-by. This pain was accentuated by the sense of solitariness he expressed ("this was before the great extra-European immigration occurred, so I was… my physical appearance was rather foreign"). Second, this experience in the early 1970s is contrasted with his experience in today's Sweden, where he can "walk along a street in Stockholm, [and] no one knows that I am a Jew". In that way, it seems like the demographic changes that have occurred in Swedish society, as a result of migration from the Global South, have been beneficial in diminishing the interviewee's own exposure to "everyday racism" (Essed 1991). While his physical appearance drew people's attention in central Stockholm fifty years ago, this is no longer the case, according to the interviewee, conveying the image that he nowadays passes as white. As a third observation, it is noteworthy that from my perspective this interviewee downplayed his own actual experiences of anti-Jewish racism—in addition to the experiences described above, he had also received threats from far-right groups targeting his Jewishness, after publishing what could be described as an antiracist article in a Swedish newspaper—but simultaneously underlined his worry about anti-Jewish racism among Muslims, of which he lacked personal experience. For

example, he emphasised that he wouldn't wear a kippah in the Malmö neighbourhood of Rosengård—here functioning as a metonym for non-European and chiefly Middle Eastern migrants—thereby stressing his concern for anti-Jewish racism among migrants from the Middle East. Thereby, this account recalls what we saw in Chapter 5 regarding the discursive constructions of Muslims as antisemites, implying that anti-Jewish racism is essentially something coming from abroad, and that "internal" Swedish racism against Jews is hardly worth mentioning.

Thus, the account of this interviewee indicated that migration from the Global South to Sweden had made him pass as less "foreign", and less exposed to racism, in a Swedish context, compared to his first years in Sweden after fleeing from Poland. Paradoxically, the interviewee also argued that migration from the Global South was his main source of worry as far as anti-Jewish racism was concerned.

Speaking of historical change in the racial regime, another informant, born in the 1950s and living in Malmö, made an interesting observation concerning different approaches to Jewish identity among his generation and that of his children:

> If there is someone whom I haven't met before and the topic of Jewishness arises, I ask myself very quickly: should I continue this path, this discussion, or should I try to redirect the conversation? I am trying to redirect it to a lesser extent now; nowadays I have this strategy of being a Jew and being open for a discussion about it. This can sound a bit contradictory, because the times are tougher now, but before I used to be more reluctant to expose my Jewishness. I don't know why that is; maybe it's a question of personality: maybe I am sometimes more obstinate now, and I don't want to hide anything, I want to be out.
>
> When I was younger and went to school, I guess it was much more natural for me not to expose my Jewishness. But I guess that was due to my personal insecurity, like all youngsters, and when you are in your teens you don't really know, your identity hasn't been formed yet, you know. And then sometimes I thought it was embarrassing. When things about Jewishness or relating to Judaism were discussed, I held back. Today it is not like that.
>
> And I think there is this gigantic difference compared to my children, their way of highlighting their Jewishness. They never hide it and they are way more open about it. And their friends, their non-Jewish friends, I mean it has been in the open all the time, and they have been so interested. My children have invited their non-Jewish friends to our home for Shabbat dinner, something I would never have done when I was their age—of course not, that was something

> embarrassing. It was completely different. And their non-Jewish friends have also participated in our celebrations of Jewish holidays, and it has been so very much, much more open. So, despite things being tougher now, they are much more open than I was back then, although it wasn't tough back then.

This interviewee expressed great concern about anti-Jewish racism in today's Swedish society and contrasted today's "tough times" with the Sweden of his childhood and youth, which he argued "wasn't tough", in the sense that the degree of anti-Jewish racism was understood as considerably lower than today. At the same time, he pointed out an apparent paradox regarding this historical change: while times had become "tougher" and anti-Jewish racism had become more pronounced in Swedish society, from his point of view, his own children harboured less feelings of shame for being Jewish, and they were more open about their Jewish identity in their interaction with non-Jews than the interviewee said that he had been at their age, when he had strictly separated his Jewish and non-Jewish friendship circles. He appeared rather fascinated by his children's ability to move freely between both Jewish and non-Jewish social circles in Malmö, and particularly by his children inviting their non-Jewish friends to celebrate Shabbat or important Jewish festivities at their home. Although the interviewee did not provide any explanation as to why this change had occurred, I suggest it be understood in light of a shift in the Swedish racial regime as a consequence of migration to Sweden from the Global South, which has led to demographic changes diminishing the social pressure to adapt to Swedish "sameness", and opening up for more ways to lead a life in Sweden. If many informants described Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s as relatively homogenous, they depicted today's Sweden instead as a country with more "immigrants" and more diverse cultural expressions and physical appearances. Judging from the quote above, it seems plausible that this shift in Swedish society benefitted the interviewee's children, and their generation of Jews in Sweden, regarding their ability not to feel shame for being Jewish, and for them to seemingly regard cultural diversity as something natural.

Another interviewee, who in a previous quote emphasised the normative blondness of Sweden at the time when she grew up, also reflected upon shifts that had occurred in Swedish society, concerning both the intensity of racism, but also the public debate about it, not least as far as anti-Jewish racism was concerned:

> I mean, the enormous difference is that when I was young there was no discussion about the Shoah; before the 1980s people didn't talk about it. And this was so despite my having relatively close friends whose parents were survivors, but none of us asked any questions. Their parents were just very tiny

> people and spoke Swedish with an accent. If you had been in the ghetto, you didn't grow to become very big… And I just assumed that they had been somewhere else during the War. I guess that is the enormous difference. People didn't speak about it in the 1970s. Was it '82 or '84, this German tv series, *Holocaust*? Before that, people hardly knew of it. There was almost no one. Well, Larsson had written about it in the form of novels for young girls, but hardly anything else. *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Zenia Larsson—that was all. So that is an enormous difference. I am thinking about these historical windows: in some way it was a golden era… Back then it was a more subtle racism. During those years there wasn't really any overt racism, and in many ways that was very, very comforting. But then there were these more subtle signs, which were hard to frame in words.

Here, the interviewee described what she experienced as a silence surrounding the Holocaust during her childhood, but also the paradoxical changes that the last few decades of social and political development have implied for Swedish society: while racism according to her had become more manifest, it had also become easier to talk about racism in Sweden. For her, the existence of racism has now been acknowledged in the public debate in another way than before, and the memory of the Shoah is no longer silenced as she had experienced it during her youth. Simultaneously, she described Sweden prior to this historical shift as "golden", in the sense that she understood the racism dominating this period as only "subtle" (yet hard to name), but not overt or direct (despite her own experiences of being subjected to racist bullying as a child). She also expressed feelings of shame for never having asked her friend's parents about their experiences during the War, and for having assumed that they had not been in the Nazi death camps, attributing this unawareness to the silence which she argued had dominated Sweden's way of handling racism and Nazism in the first decades after the Holocaust.

Thus, the interviews with people born after the first couple of decades after the Holocaust give the image of a shift in the Swedish racial regime, due to migration to Sweden from the Global South, making the country less homogenous in terms of public displays of both cultural difference and non-stereotypically Scandinavian phenotypical traits. According to the interviewees, this seems to have opened up for more visibly displaying "difference" in Swedish society, thereby allowing more space for Jews. In other words, the social pressure to adapt to Swedish "sameness" and to Protestant-secular norms seems to have diminished. At the same time, it also seems to have made the many Jews appear as "less foreign" or "whiter" compared with other racial minorities.

# Conclusion: A racial regime under change

In this chapter, we have seen how interviewees depicted Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s, and partly also the 1970s, as an ethnically and culturally relatively homogenous country. Sometimes Sweden was described in a somewhat humoristic way as a provincial country, as a bit absurd with its harmonious and innocent aloofness. In accordance with this picture, many interviewees described themselves as having constituted an exotic or picturesque element in Sweden when growing up. While there were examples of racist bullying, racial slurs and exclusion, the general picture in the material was that although the interviewees to various degrees had been constructed as "different" in terms of phenotypical traits, family names and/or cultural-religious traditions, they did not understand this to imply a categorisation as inferior to their non-Jewish peers.

In this context, many told me about their own and their families' efforts to adapt to Swedish Protestant-secular norms. For the most part, the interviewees referred to this as something fairly unproblematic and natural, although there were also examples in their accounts of how this adaptation had led later to feelings of shame, and also silence surrounding Jewish legacy and the historical memory of the Holocaust, and of how many had been discreet and cautious about their Jewishness in the public sphere. At the same time, there were also feelings of frustration that anti-Jewish racism persists in Swedish society, despite the efforts made by many Jews to adapt to "Swedishness". The exclamation by the woman I met at Bajit that "Swedes know nothing about us!" seems to reflect such a feeling of frustration and a certain tiredness, as a consequence of strong efforts to adapt.

Hence, what emerges in the interview material is a racial regime, with strong pressures to adapt to Protestant-secular norms, but where it became possible for Jews in the first decades after the Shoah to attain a position of "subordinate inclusion" into "Swedishness". This, however, was at the cost of great efforts to adapt, leading to a sense of being "invisible" in Swedish society. It seems that this relative "invisibility" implied a certain level of "tolerance"/ "acceptance" for the Jewish population, since it did not challenge Swedish "sameness". Indeed, the invisibility appears as a condition for white Protestant-secular "Swedishness" not to be threatened in its racial dominance.

In that regard, the demographic changes in Swedish society that several of the interviewees referred to are interesting to observe. While migration to Sweden from the Global South seems to have implied that many Jews have become "more Swedish", "whiter", or to a lesser extent categorised as "different" in relative terms, some interviewees also referred to this migration

as a reason for resurged racism against Jews in Sweden. While many agreed that "the times are tougher now" compared to previous decades as far as the situation for Jews in Sweden is concerned, it seemed that Sweden, having become a less homogenous country as a consequence of migration from the Global South, has also diminished the social pressure on the interviewees to adapt to Swedish Protestant-secular norms, and has opened up for new ways of living beyond the demands of Swedish "sameness", thereby challenging what is perceived as "normal" in Sweden. In other words, the degree to which the requirements to adapt to this "sameness" is less pronounced today, which seems to be paralleled by demographic shifts in Swedish society, is reflected by more visibility of non-whiteness in public spaces, increased public debates on racism, but also by renewed and harshening debates on national belonging. This in turn mirrors a shifting dynamic in the Swedish racial regime, shaping Jewish subjectivities in contemporary Sweden.

# Chapter 8: Between "Swedishness" and other "Others"

## Introduction: "We have a rather good life"

One of the people I interviewed was a man in his early sixties, living in Malmö. After the interview had ended and I had turned off the microphone, he looked very sad, having talked with me for over an hour and a half about his parents surviving the Shoah, and his own experiences of living as a Jew in Sweden, among other themes. When I asked him how he felt, he said, quite laconically: "We have a rather good life, but, you know, it hits you from time to time." This phrase stayed in my memory and I have returned to it several times during the process of working with this dissertation, since I think it captures aspects that were present in many of the interviews I conducted. I interpret the first part of the quote, that he and his wife "have a rather good life", as a reflection of a situation in which their position as Jews in the Swedish racial regime did not necessarily constitute a problem on an everyday basis. The second part of the quote, "but, you know, it hits you from time to time", can be seen as mirroring the interview situation in which both intergenerational trauma and present-day racism against Jews were prominent themes, thereby disrupting a situation of "normality" and relative privilege. In that sense, this short quote can be seen as representing the ambivalence regarding processes of racialisation of Jews in Sweden that were present in many of the interviews I conducted.

After exploring, in the previous chapter, the topic of historical change that was present in several interviews, as well as the importance of "sameness" and "difference" for experiences of racialisation, we now turn to how the interviewees navigated the Swedish racial regime and their own position of both being subjected to forms of racism, as well as on other occasions being positioned as "belonging" to the nation. While previous qualitative studies have explored experiences of anti-Jewish racism (Nylund Skog 2014, 2006; Sarri Krantz 2018; B. Wigerfelt and Wigerfelt 2015; Grobgeld and Bursell 2021), little research has been conducted explicitly analysing this ambiguity in

the Swedish racial regime. The themes of "passing as white" and "coming out" as Jewish are central aspects of these balancing acts, as well as the tensions, challenges, but also possibilities for antiracist alliances with (other) people racialised as non-white. This chapter also discusses the critique against forms of public memory of the Holocaust that was articulated by some of the interviewees; it discusses intergenerational transference of trauma, and how this relates both to politics of national belonging as well as the silencing of Jewish experiences in Sweden.

## A balancing act

Related to the statement that "we have a rather good life", another interviewee, a man in his twenties living in Stockholm, shared the following reflection:

> I think that among Western and Northern European Jews there is this situation: you are no longer economically or structurally discriminated like many other minorities, but there is still a non-economic racism. It can be about Jews not allowed to be a part of the white West, or Jews having a status that is somehow conditional. I think that is something Jews and other minority groups have in common. And the sad part is that it can appear as if Jews actually were white and had the same privileges as white people. I mean, in many respects we do. In Sweden, as far as I know, if you look at the housing situation, salary discrimination and so on, conditions are fairly equal. But if you look beyond what is strictly economic, there is still a rhetoric and a threat similar to those that other groups face.

In this excerpt, the interviewee pointed to the fact that Jews in today's Sweden are not subjected to what sometimes has been coined "exploitative racism", as discussed in the theoretical Chapter 3, which is a form of racial discrimination in the labour market where certain racial groups, through a set of both formal and informal procedures, are allocated to perform certain labour tasks under more precarious conditions (Balibar 1991). In today's Sweden, the labour market is highly gendered and racialised, and sectors with a high percentage of workers who are women and/or born outside of Sweden are often characterised by low salaries and precarious working conditions (P. Mulinari 2007). Likewise, Roediger (1991) has coined the term "wages of whiteness" to capture how the racially structured labour market benefits those racialised as white. As this interviewee pointed out, however, Jews in Sweden are not subjected to discrimination in the labour market. In other words, there is no

indication that the category of "race" separates Jews from non-Jewish white Swedes in terms of positions in the labour market, according to the interviewee. As also stated by the interviewee, the same goes for the housing market. Despite this absence of exploitative racism, which many other groups racialised as non-white in Sweden experience, the interviewee asserted that there are nevertheless forms of non-economic racism, including threats and a rhetoric of exclusion, that hit Jews in Sweden. In our conversation, he said that it is particularly in relation to the Protestant-secular norms governing Swedish society that racism against Jews is currently shown. For him, this implied that Jews are in one way included in "the West" and perceived as white, but in another way excluded from the same "West" and seen as not quite white. This ambivalent position, although not always expressed in those terms, was something that characterised many interviews in my sample.

Sometimes the notion that "we have a rather good life" was discussed in relation to public reactions to antisemitic crimes. As already explored, many interviewees expressed great concern for the future of Jewish life in Sweden, fearing that the last years' racist attacks against Jews both in Europe and the United States would in the long run imply a greater danger for the survival of Sweden's Jewish population. Not all interviewees, however, shared this same concern. One man, in his mid-thirties and living in Stockholm, on the contrary asserted that Jews in Sweden had never had it better than today:

> The [Swedish] state somehow stands with us. And this is something that Jews somehow have managed to do, this struggle to move their positions and rights forward. Political victories have been gained. There is an enormous support when something antisemitic happens: the Prime Minister makes a statement. […] The point of reference for the Jewish community is the majority population, and in one way that is appropriate. But there is no other minority having that reference. I mean, you go and tell that to someone from Somalia. […] When things happen to Jews, the papers write about it. I think that is great. We have never had it better.

This interviewee understood the public condemnations of antisemitism, as well as the importance given to the historical memory of the Holocaust in Sweden, as the result of a struggle by the Swedish-Jewish community for recognition and equality in relation to the majoritarian population. Emphasising that "We have never had it better," he also gave a critique of some Jewish voices that, he argued, exaggerated the level of antisemitism in Swedish society, and compared the situation of Jews in Sweden to the level of racism that other minoritised racialised groups in Sweden, such as Somalis, endure. He made the point that the prominence accorded to antisemitism in contemporary public

debates in Sweden is due to the majority population being the "point of reference" for the Jewish community, that is to say that Jews in Sweden expect to be treated like white non-Jewish Swedes. The interviewee intimated that this is something that other racialised groups do not expect, since the level of racism they are exposed to is much more severe than anti-Jewish racism, from his point of view. If I understand the interviewee correctly, he meant that the intensity of racism that many other groups in Sweden endure makes them see it as less realistic to expect to be treated as equal to the white majoritarian population, whereas it is possible for the Jewish population to have the latter as a point of reference.

A number of scholars (Rothberg 2009; Goldberg 2009a) have identified the shortcomings in comparing and measuring suffering or intensities of racism among different groups in the way that this interviewee did. Nevertheless, I do agree with the interviewee's analysis that when anti-Jewish verbal or physical attacks take place in Sweden, this is often compared in the mass media and in political statements to the lack of racism that the white majority population faces, something that was implicit in the discourses analysed in Chapter 5. Another example of this from my fieldwork is an observation I made during an educational day on antisemitism that I attended in Malmö in October 2018, organised by the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism and directed primarily at teachers and social workers working in the municipality. At the end of the day, there was a panel discussion on strategies to mitigate antisemitism in Malmö. One of the panellists, a white non-Jewish journalist, exclaimed during the conversation that "it shouldn't be any weirder to be a Jew in Malmö than to be me!" While this was her personal statement, I suggest this reflects a notion that is present in Swedish public discourse when antisemitism is discussed, in a context where the differences between the Jewish population and the white majority population are understood to be "minimal", as one interviewee put it. In other words, there is a discourse of "sameness" (Gullestad 2002) at play here, in which the category of Jews is included into a white Swedish "people like us".

While this could be understood both as the result of the political struggle of the Jewish community for acknowledgment and equal rights, as the interviewee did, as well as a partial incorporation of the Jewish community into a position of "subordinated inclusion" within the Swedish nation in the post-Holocaust era, the comparison in public discourse with the majoritarian population seems to be something that does differentiate the category of Jews from categories in other ways racialised as non-white. That is not to say that other racial groups do not compare the level of racism they are exposed to with the privileges of the white majoritarian population, but rather that such a

comparison is not attributed great importance in public debates in Sweden, in which the differences between the white majoritarian population and people of colour become naturalised. In the case of the Jewish community, however, it seems that in a political era that is partially defined by a rejection of the horrors of the Holocaust and a disidentification of Europe's genocide against its Jewish population (El-Tayeb 2011), the racial differentiations that do occur in the Swedish racial regime between the Jewish community and the majoritarian population are to a large degree absent or silenced in public discussions on antisemitism, as discussed in Chapter 5. The societal frame of the relative racial privilege of the category of Jews therefore opens up for a variety of subject positions balancing between privileges of partial whiteness, partial exclusion from the white Protestant-secular national community, as well as complex relations with other minoritised groups.

Hence, the notion that the situation for Jews in Sweden is "rather good" was often emphasised by the interviewees through comparisons to the situation of other racial minorities. On some occasions, this comparison was made in reference to the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Sweden Democrats. For example, one interviewee in Stockholm replied in the following way to my question on whether he thought that the Sweden Democrats constituted a threat against the Jewish population in Sweden:

> They are dangerous for the type of society in which we live. Openness, having the possibility to be the one you want to be, where minorities are tolerated and respected. So of course, they are dangerous, but whether they are specifically dangerous for me as a Jew, I haven't thought a lot about that. Their main enemy is Muslims, you know. I don't think they constitute a physical threat against me as a Jew. But they do agitate against Muslims on a much larger scale. I mean, that is what they do, so against Muslims they are more than just a general danger.

This interviewee understood the far-right to be a general threat against the values of liberal democracy, which he shared, and that the Sweden Democrats have an anti-Muslim agenda and therefore are a specific threat to the Muslim population in Sweden. However, he did not perceive them to be a threat against the Jewish population or against himself as a Jew. While there were other interviewees who expressed great concern over the Sweden Democrats—the third-largest political party in the Swedish parliament at the time of the interviews (Rydgren and Van der Meiden 2019)—not least in regards to their neo-Nazi roots and the statements made by a spokesperson of the party that a Jewish and a Swedish identity are mutually exclusive (Orrenius Dec. 14, 2014), this interviewee did not share that concern. It should be stated that all interviewees without exception

expressed great concern over openly neo-Nazi groups in Sweden, such as the Nordic Resistance Movement, and regarded them to be a threat against Jews. However, the fact that this interviewee and some others didn't regard the Sweden Democrats to be a particularly anti-Jewish threat can be seen as mirroring a situation in Sweden where racism in public debates first and foremost targets refugees, Muslims and migrants from the Middle East. Therefore, for some interviewees, racism against Jews didn't appear as a great problem in Swedish society generally speaking, at least not in relative terms.

## The Holocaust: "they can handle us by feeling sorry for us"

Among those interviewees who emphasised a view that the situation for Jews in Sweden was "rather good", there were occasionally also parts of their narratives that gave slightly different nuances to this understanding. Sometimes this was done in relation to the public memory of the Holocaust and the importance attributed to this both in public discourses as well as in educational material for schools. For example, one interviewee in her eighties, who was living in Gothenburg, argued that antisemitism was not a big societal problem in Sweden, despite her own experiences of racism, which she also shared with me. When I mentioned some figures from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande Rådet), showing a rise in reported antisemitic hate crimes in Sweden in recent years (Brottsförebyggande rådet 2015), and asked her how she understood this rise, she answered in the following way:

> I don't know if Jews have been very good at promoting their history [*laughs*] and have brought people with them somehow. I think of the Holocaust. Except for the deniers, almost everyone thinks it is an awful thing that many Jews were exposed to. People have repeated the phrase "we mustn't forget", Göran Persson organised this Holocaust conference, and they published a book that was brought to schools. I am not sure of how much teachers have learnt from that, though. Not everything, I believe. [*Laughs*] And while I do agree that one must not forget, I also think that memory must be used for the sake of something. It is not only about telling what once happened, it is also important to… I think this can contribute to regarding Muslims in a way… There is like a clash. [*Mimicking:*] "Jews, they have experienced so much, they are so intelligent, they are so musical; but, you know, those Muslims, they are complete strangers, and they are only terrorists." Jews are never accused of being terrorists, except for maybe in Israel.

This interviewee argued that while the Jewish community in Sweden had been successful in "promoting their history", she also stated that the educational efforts in relation to the public memory of the Holocaust had been insufficient. In a somewhat mocking tone, she also said that "teachers" had not "learnt everything" about the Holocaust, mirroring her critique of the Swedish middle class and its alleged narrow-minded nationalism that was a theme throughout the interview with her. She also believed that the importance given to the Holocaust in the public sphere was unfair, in the sense that other racialised, minoritised groups in Sweden do not have their history and traumas acknowledged to the same extent, but also that the public memory of the Holocaust is insufficiently used to discuss contemporary forms of racism. According to her, this opens up for a situation in which Jews are counterposed to Muslims, with the first group being regarded as victims and embodying extraordinary human qualities, and the second group being categorised as outsiders to Swedish society and as inherent terrorists.

Her assertion that the public memory of the Shoah is treated with a certain superficiality in Sweden was echoed in the accounts of several interviewees, who on the one hand regarded it as something positive that the memory of the Shoah was taken seriously by the state, but on the other also expressed doubts concerning how the Shoah actually was being remembered. Going back to the argument made by El-Tayeb (2011), that the historical memory of the Holocaust is foundational for contemporary Europe and for its perception of race and racism, it was possible to grasp, in some of the interviews, a critique of what this incorporation of the Shoah into not only a pan-European but more specifically a Swedish national narrative implies for the struggle against contemporary anti-Jewish racism. For example, one of the teachers in the sample made the following remark when I asked him why he thought antisemitism persisted in Sweden:

> I believe we have overestimated the importance of enlightening campaigns about the Holocaust. Going in groups to Auschwitz… I think people have expected too much from that. When I worked with Expo [an NGO working against racism and far-right extremism], I often gave lectures to teachers. And I noticed that people often asked for a button to press to neutralise things: that is, right-wing extremism or antisemitism or racism in general. But there is no such button. It is all about showing your own commitment to democracy. Show that you stand up for something. Get angry when there is a reason to get angry. Show your commitment, that democracy cannot be relativised, that there are absolute values. And, of course, there is room for education about the Holocaust, but that is nothing that can be conveyed in an isolated form.

Here, the interviewee gave a critique of what he argued is an exaggerated belief in Sweden that educating school pupils and the population in general about the Holocaust will remedy anti-Jewish racism. Present in this quote is also a critique of a superficial engagement with antisemitism that he witnessed among teachers in particular, who, according to him, mostly were interested in a quick-fix against antisemitism ("a button to press"), but who were unwilling to actually "show commitment" to "democracy" in everyday life. On the one hand, there is then a situation where the Holocaust is thought of as something that is being widely talked about, creating the image that Swedish society takes antisemitism very seriously, while possibly also causing a situation which has been labelled "Holocaust fatigue" (Schweber 2006). On the other hand, some interviewees also held the opinion that the engagement with the memory of the Holocaust is superficial and reveals an unwillingness to actually deal with and fight the fundaments of Swedish anti-Jewish racism.

From my perspective, this alleged superficiality seems to fit well with a perception of anti-Jewish racism as coming from abroad and not really concerning Swedish society in a deeper sense. Going back to El-Tayeb, this would mean that while the Holocaust, and therefore also antisemitism, is foundational to contemporary Europe, it is paradoxically also understood as external to the Swedish experience, since Sweden was not occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II. This opens up for a situation where both the Holocaust and antisemitism can be discussed at length in the Swedish public sphere, without really engaging with the anti-Jewish structures of Swedish society.

Another interviewee, who had been highly involved in political work to ensure that the Shoah is remembered in Sweden, had come to the conclusion that it was easier for Swedish society to handle Jews as victims than as actors in their own right:

> As long as Jews are victims, then it is possible to say: "We will help them, we will support them, we feel sorry for them." I know that within our community too a lot is related to the Shoah. Sweden didn't participate in the War, and many came to Sweden after the War, so the Jewish congregations have to a great extent been constituted by the first, second, third and now fourth generation of survivors. But we have also got a fantastic millennial history and traditions. There was life prior to the Shoah! But focusing on victimhood and on the awful things, that is maybe easier for the majoritarian society, since they then can handle us by feeling sorry for us. But that is not respect. It is a matter of perspective.

This interviewee pointed to what she argued was a tendency in Swedish society to extensively associate Jewishness with the Holocaust and thereby reduce Jews in Sweden to Holocaust victims/survivors, maintaining that this meant that positive features of Jewish history and culture were concealed.[29] While she contended that the Jewish community was partly responsible for this focus on the Holocaust, she also claimed that the reduction of Jewishness to a matter of victimhood (Wagrell 2020) could be seen as a way for the majority population to "handle" the Jewish minority in Sweden. In relation to Gullestad's (2002) argument that Scandinavian societies are characterised by a social pressure to adapt to societal "sameness" and that "difference" is regarded as something problematic, this interviewee's claim can be interpreted as shedding light on how Jewish "difference" is made manageable in Sweden. In that sense, the reduction of Jewishness to victimhood reproduces a hierarchical relation between the non-Jewish majority population and the Jewish minority to the detriment of the latter. To a certain extent, this is relatable to the argument put forward in previous chapters that Jews seem to be easier for the majority population to "handle" and for the stability of the racial regime when they are dead, threatened or self-sacrificing, rather than alive and thriving.

## Holocaust and "difference"

Beside this critique of the public memory of the Holocaust in Sweden, when the theme of the Shoah was brought up by the interviewees, they sometimes did so to share their reflections on their transferred memory of the Holocaust. Often these accounts highlighted aspects of what it can mean to embody "difference" in Swedish society, as far as family histories of exile and genocide are concerned. One woman, born in the 1980s and whose father's family migrated to Sweden from a German-speaking area prior to the outbreak of World War II, told me the following:

> One has this obsession with history and with certain topics that sometimes kill the atmosphere… But also, well, this is ridiculous, but people's relation to… Well, I once was studying at an independent adult education college - [*folkhögskola*], there were some people standing there, and one of them had parents from Austria, so she speaks German. She was speaking German, and

29 For a similar argument, see Göran Rosenberg's (2021) book *Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis obesverade kärlek*.

> there were some other people who had studied German at school, so they would joke about that. […] I mean, my dad's mother tongue is German; now his Swedish is better; but I directly started thinking about this. I didn't think, "Oh, here they are speaking German, like the Nazis did"; not at all, but rather, "This is a language, and, if history had turned out differently, I might have grown up in a German-speaking context", or… I don't know. I don't speak German because my dad never spoke to us in German, but something like that went through my head. I have thought a great deal about that: what you can joke about, and what is unproblematic. Some things are so charged and other people don't get that, like white people. I guess that has to do with Swedishness, whiteness, or I don't know what to call it.

In this quote, the interviewee linked her family history, Jewishness, genocide, historical memory, whiteness and Swedishness all together. Since the topic of whiteness emerged in our conversation, I deliberately asked her how she thought of whiteness in relation to her Jewish identity, and the quote above was part of the answer to that question. The interviewee also told me that her reflections on her Jewish identity had led to what she referred to as her "obsession with history": that is, the need she often felt to talk about and study the Holocaust and European Jewish history, a need that she understood as having no parallel in the lives of white Swedes. Listening to Swedes speaking German in a casual everyday situation reminded her of the forced exile of her family due to Hitler's political takeover, and made her wonder how her life would have turned out had it not been for racism. Thus, in this quote, the interviewee identified aspects—the need to explore specific (family) histories and the loss of language—which in everyday situations differentiated her from non-Jewish white Swedes. While this interviewee also pointed out that she was white-passing and to a large extent enjoyed the same racial privileges as many non-Jewish white Swedes, she also argued that she had had certain experiences that she recognised among some people of colour in Sweden. In that sense, she felt a shared commonality between her Jewish identity and forms of identifying among some people of colour. I wish to highlight this analysis made by this interviewee, precisely because it does not remove differences between white-passing Jews and people of colour in Sweden, nor eradicates possible commonalities, but rather pinpoints what appear to be some of the conditions of many of the interviewees: a high degree of white-passing, inclusion into Swedishness and absence of racial exploitation in the labour market, while simultaneously there are also forms of differentiation. This in turn therefore seems to open up for the possibility to identity both with Swedish whiteness and with groups racialised as non-white, and therefore to wander between various racial subject positions.

Silence in relation to the Holocaust and racism against Jews was an important theme in some of the interviews. As discussed in Chapter 7, an interviewee who had grown up in Sweden in the 1960s told me that there had been such silence in Sweden surrounding the Holocaust that it led her to be incapable of reading her friends' parents as Holocaust survivors. Another interviewee, whose grandparents had survived Auschwitz, disclosed how the trauma of the Shoah had affected his own ability to identify antisemitism, as well as his own personal well-being. At the beginning of the interview, he told me that he lacked any personal experiences of antisemitism whatsoever. When, despite this, I asked him if he had really never heard any anti-Jewish utterances in his surroundings, he answered in the following way:

> I haven't thought much about it… Of course, there is antisemitism, so I… If someone whom I admire said something antisemitic, I am sure I would react very strongly against it, but if I notice there is antisemitism, it is not anything I normally react strongly against. It is more or less like homophobia: you cannot take it in all the time. And there is certainly one thing that Holocaust survivors have learnt, and that is to really shut off, and that has had horrible consequences. Older Holocaust survivors have learnt to shut off emotionally, and then some of them started talking and telling people about it in the Nineties. But my grandmother and grandfather never had time for that. So, unfortunately, my mother knows very little, and I have asked a thousand questions more about my grandmother and grandfather than she ever did. I notice that she also has a lot of this shutting-off of emotions. This sounds very analytical, but I think that this is an important reason why I haven't been feeling very well: that both my maternal grandparents were in the Holocaust, and on my dad's side of the family they experienced World War II in a different way. All my family is emotionally deranged and they shut off emotionally quite a lot. One of my big problems has been that I sleep far too much, and now I have come to the conclusion that this is because I shut off my emotions.

In this very strong passage, the interviewee linked his own inability to identify antisemitism to the trauma transferred to him and his mother by his grandparents who survived the Nazi death camp in Auschwitz. Arguably, this transference of trauma had resulted in a transgenerational pattern (Hirsch 2012) of "shutting off emotions" as a survival strategy. It is also noteworthy that this interviewee, identifying as a gay man, compared his unwillingness to register forms of everyday racism to his unwillingness to register homophobia on a daily basis. Implicitly, therefore, he acknowledged that he had experiences of both racism and homophobia in his everyday life, but that he refused to remember them ("you cannot take it in all the time") in order to protect himself from the harm inflicted upon him by both racist and homophobic interpellations. Also, he understood

this behavioural pattern as causing him emotional and psychological harm, but that he was also in a process of trying to open up emotionally. From this perspective, then, his inability to identify forms of anti-Jewish racism could function as a form of protecting himself from racism.

In another case, an interviewee, whose grandfather's family had migrated to Sweden from Eastern Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, had experienced significant silence concerning her Jewishness. Only as an adolescent had she been told that her grandfather (who by then had passed away) was a Jew, and she had remarkably little knowledge about her family history. However, she clearly disclosed that her mother had a deep fear concerning a possible resurgence of antisemitism; a fear that she now shared. Even though her family had not directly experienced the Holocaust—although there possibly had been family experiences of pogroms in Eastern Europe—the remarkable silence concerning her Jewish heritage can be seen as an effect of her family's survival strategy in order to protect itself from European and Swedish racism against Jews.

Another example of both silence and invisibility regarding Jewishness in Sweden is the following quote from an interviewee in southern Sweden who a few years ago had participated in a demonstration against antisemitism, which was organised in response to an antisemitic event that had taken place. Going to the demonstration with his wife, he had asked his adult son to come with them:

> One of my sons, he didn't want to go. We said, "Follow us to the square." "No", he replied, "I don't want to be seen there. On Shabbat, with the candles—I don't want to be exposed. Some idiot can come by. Although the risk is small, I don't want to have to deal with that afterwards, my going there. I am not that Jewish." Well, I am a bit more Jewish—well, not so Jewish that I feel I have to go, but I like being among Jewish people and I like celebrating different holidays. But he didn't want to come out as a Jewish person; he didn't feel comfortable with that. And many people aren't. I met someone in Lund, it was at the commemoration of the *Kristallnacht*. There was this Jewish couple and we talked about antisemitism. And they said, "It is horrible." And then they told me that they hadn't come out as Jews to their friends in [*name of town*]. It just hadn't happened. "It is difficult," they said, "not least when they speak about Israel and so on." "But haven't you told them?", I asked. "No, it just hasn't happened, and now it feels a bit…" That must be horrible. Yes, a bit tough.

In this first part of the quote, the interviewee told me that his adult son didn't want to participate in the demonstration, due to his fear of being categorised as a Jew in public, and of the consequences this might have for him. In the second part of the quote, the interviewee expressed the astonishment he felt when, at

another demonstration, on encountering a Jewish couple and talking to them for a while, it became apparent that this couple—whom I understood to be middle-aged—had not disclosed their Jewish identity to what seemed to be nearly lifelong friends in the town where they were living. According to my interviewee, they had said that this was because they were afraid that, if they revealed their Jewish identity to their non-Jewish friends, it would lead to polemical and, for them, painful discussions about Israel. During the interview, he also told me that his wife wasn't open about her Jewish identity at her workplace. I suggest all these accounts of hidden Jewish identity—his son, the couple he randomly met, and his wife—reflect a situation in Sweden where at least some people continue to find it extremely difficult to be open about their Jewish identity, both in public as well as in more private settings. In other words, this account points to the difficulty of "coming out" (Sedgwick 1990) as Jewish in a Swedish setting, where many of the interviewees could often, though not always, pass as white.

## Navigating relative racial privilege

A theme that was recurrent in the accounts of the interviewees, and which they described and related to in various ways, was anti-Jewish racism in a context of different forms of racisms in Sweden. For example, an interviewee who was involved in a project on Jewish-Muslim dialogue stated ironically that "nowadays we Jews have got competition from Muslims", referring to increasing levels of anti-Muslim racism in Swedish society. Later in the interview, she returned to the racist harassment that many Muslims in Sweden face today, and mentioned cases where Muslim women have had their hijabs pulled off their heads, something that seemed to have made a particular impact on her.

Those interviewees who had a strong and vocal antiracist identity often mentioned the hierarchical differentiation between Jews and other racial minorities in Swedish society, emphasising their attempts to navigate those structural inequalities. Often, this was experienced as something rather painful, since many times they found it tricky to balance between, on the one hand, their own experiences of racism and, on the other, their relative racial privilege and degrees of white-passing. For example, an interviewee who told me extensively about her ponderings upon what it implies to be Jewish in a Swedish society characterised by multiple racisms narrated the following anecdote, which renders visible her experience as both subjected to racism and as holding degrees of racial privilege:

> Once, when I was at a friend's place in the countryside, I missed the bus and I had to take a taxi for quite a long distance, so I was talking to the driver for quite a long time. As it happened, he was also a member of [a political party]. We talked about all sorts of things and had an interesting conversation. And then, a short while before we arrived, I took out my card. Then he sees my name and asks me about it. I never quite know; most of the time I say something else, but now we had had such a nice conversation, so I told him the way it was. He suddenly became very confused. "Can you explain to me why Jews decide everything in the world?" he said. "No, but it's not like that," I replied. "But, after all, it is the Jews ruling capitalism. I just wonder, how did that happen?" he said. He didn't say it in a threatening way, but it was totally obvious that this person, whom I had identified as having a clear leftist analysis, held this kind of opinion. There are these kind of thoughts and hints that you can sometimes hear; "After all, there is a strong Jewish lobby."

The interviewee was visibly hurt by the racist conspiracy theories she had been exposed to by a person whom she had identified as a political ally. This was accentuated by the fact that she had the option either to reveal or conceal her Jewish identity when her surname became the topic of conversation. Although she had been hesitant, and stressed that most of the time she does not reveal to people that her surname is Jewish, she decided to disclose her Jewish identity in this case, since a certain trust had been built up between her and the taxi-driver due to their common party affiliation. She also seemed troubled by the fact that although this case of racism was not directly violent or threatening, it reflected a phantasy about Jewish wealth and power, merged with an anti-capitalist ideology. I interpret this episode as capturing two specificities of anti-Jewish racism. First, there is the racist phantasy of Jewish strength, in the form of world power. This is something that some scholars have underlined as one of the features characterising "classic antisemitism" (Dencik 2020). Second, there is also the fact that the interviewee in this context passed as white, and that her Jewish identity wasn't obvious to her interlocutor until her name was revealed. This seems to have implied that when she was exposed to racism, this was also experienced as the interlocutor breaking a certain trust. In a Swedish context, Susanne Nylund Skog (2014, 2006) has also shown that it is common for Jews to pass as white, which in turn demands strategies for continuing to pass as white or "coming out" as Jewish in a non-Jewish context. The emphasis on the experience of "coming out" as Jewish has in turn made other scholars discuss the commonalities and differences between Jewish experiences in a white society and queer experiences in a heteronormative experience (Freedman 2003; Jakobsen 2003).

In that sense, the relative racial privilege that the possibility to pass as white implies, as well as the deliberate option to disclose one's Jewish identity, not only for this person in particular but also for many of the interviewees, entailed a fear of what would happen when they chose to reveal their Jewish identity. This option of a Jewish "coming out" was shared by many interviewees in the study. While Jews are not the only racial minority in Sweden to be confronted by this dilemma—the same is, for example, also the case for many Sámi (Dankertsen 2019)—it nevertheless seems to be a defining feature of the Jewish location in the Swedish racial regime: not only balancing between positions of (subordinated) inclusion into "Swedishness" and of being racialised as non-Swedish, but also being forced to choose to what degree one wishes to be open about one's Jewishness in spaces outside the immediate private sphere.

Needless to say, this is a very different way of experiencing racism compared with those who do not pass as white and do not have the option to conceal or disclose their racial/ethnic identity. Without denying that phenotypical traits also play a part in contemporary anti-Jewish racism, this in turn means that the dynamic of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden cannot be fully apprehended in terms of the so-called "colour-line". For example, some of the most prominent classical theorists on racism, such as W.E.B. Du Bois (1990) and Frantz Fanon (1967), have taken the black-white dichotomy as a point of entry to analyse both racism and antiracist resistance in the context of the United States and the French colonial world, respectively. In Sweden, the focus on skin colour as a basis for racism has led scholars of antisemitism Karin Kvist Geverts and Lars M Andersson (2017) to suggest that this might be a reason why racism against Jews has not captured much of the interest of scholars in Sweden working in a tradition of critical race theory. While another explanation might be that many Swedish scholars of antiracism have focused on forms of racism such as exploitation in the labour market and migration policies, to which Jews in Sweden are not currently exposed, I do think that the possibility that many of the Jews in Sweden must choose whether or not to come out as Jews does create a certain dynamic that further contributes to a situation of Jewish invisibility. Not only does it seem that many Jews have felt the need to adapt to Protestant-secular norms and therefore become "invisible", but many Jews (albeit not all) oftentimes also pass as white, which in turn increases the level of Jewish invisibility in a Swedish context.

To add further complexity to this case of anti-Jewish racism in a context of multiple racisms, the interviewee above also reflected on her relative racial and class privilege in relation to the episode just described:

> Sometimes I feel shame when I speak about antisemitism because I feel so clearly that I have privilege in so many ways. Although I obviously think it is important to speak about antisemitism, I am ashamed when it is used to render racisms, which attack more harshly, such as Islamophobia, invisible. And it is incredibly difficult for many people to hold multiple thoughts in their head simultaneously. At the same time, it is my thing to speak about this in antiracist settings, and I talk about other forms of racism in Jewish contexts. I want to create a way of speaking so that there is room for both, seeing what role it plays in a larger societal structure. But this taxi-driver, what he exposed me to wasn't very nice, it fretted me, and obviously I remember it five years later. But at the same time, what he is exposed to… My God, he has a university degree and drives a cab! I can do most of what I want with my life. I feel humble about that difference. At the same time, that obviously doesn't give him any right to believe that Jews hold world power. More than anything, it won't lead to a politically relevant conclusion.

The interviewee reflected critically on the fact that both her ability to pass as white but also the forms through which anti-Jewish racism is expressed in a Swedish setting rescue her from being subjected to exploitative forms of racism, i.e. a racism restraining one's position and bargaining power in the labour market. Instead, she emphasised her own position as a middle-class person, and linked this to relative racial privilege. Probably, this non-exploitative character of contemporary anti-Jewish racism has opened up for separating anti-Jewish racism from other forms of racism.

Moreover, the interviewee above also revealed sorrow when she tried to combine her struggle against anti-Jewish racism with a struggle against other forms of racism. Throughout the interview, she seemed almost desperate to reconcile these two forms of antiracism and to construct some sort of antiracist "conviviality" (Gilroy 2006), "so there is room for both", as she expressed it. Also, what she described as feelings of shame were an indication of her reflections on her relative racial privilege. She also disclosed a fear of contributing to anti-Muslim racism through emphasising the importance of fighting against anti-Jewish racism, since the struggle against anti-Jewish racism is sometimes instrumentalised for anti-Muslim policies and discourses, as we saw in Chapter 5. The categorisation of Muslims as antisemites thus seems to exacerbate the difficulties in addressing issues of anti-Jewish racism, since this was understood as potentially increasing levels of anti-Muslim racism in Sweden, which several of the interviewees in the sample explicitly tried to avoid.

The fact that the interviewees had to balance between experiences both of racism and of relative racial privilege meant that the relationship between Jewishness and Swedishness was something that was present in all interviews.

For example, talking about cultural identity, one interviewee contended that, "You Swedes don't understand that it is actually possible to have double identities." This quote seems to reflect the position of several interviewees, who—without my asking questions about it—often reiterated that there is no antagonistic contradiction between Jewishness and Swedishness, and that both identities are reconcilable. Sometimes this was underlined by their pointing out the efforts of their parents to adapt to Protestant-secular norms. I interpret the need felt by some interviewees to emphasise the possibility of embodying multiple cultural identities as the result of an experience of having one's Swedishness questioned. Possibly, it can also be seen as an attempt to prevent having this double identity questioned in the context of the interview, in which they were facing a non-Jewish researcher belonging to the white majority population. Moreover, it is also possible to interpret the emphasis on their embodying both a Jewish and a Swedish—or a Jewish-Swedish—identity as reflecting a particular location in the Swedish racial regime, where "Swedishness" is expected to be embodied, but also is attainable. For example, one interviewee, who had made a point of his navigation between several cultural identities, made the following sarcastic remark on the issue of "Swedishness" in relation to the Jewish community:

> Swedish Jews are always Swedes. They tend to identify with… well, not among themselves—then it's always "we are Jews and Swedes are Swedes"—but on the outside it is like that. So that is not a problem, I think. Or, well, I don't know. I don't know. I am not like that. I am not a Swedish Jew. Or the Swedish part has always come third. It has always been like that. Jewish, Polish Jew, and then Swedish coming third… [Growing up] I could always be a Pole. Not among Poles [*laughs*], but among everyone else.

This interviewee, who positioned himself as an outsider both to Swedishness and to what he argued was a dominant form of lived Jewishness in a Swedish context, criticised what he understood as a desire among large parts of the Jewish community to be "Swedish". This view was also shared by another interviewee, identifying as an antiracist, when I asked questions about the declarations made by Member of Parliament Björn Söder on behalf of the Sweden Democrats: in a widely reported press interview in 2014 (Orrenius Dec. 14, 2014), he had argued that a Swedish identity and a Jewish identity were mutually exclusive. In 2018, he made similar comments, this time on his Facebook page,[30] which drew a lot of attention in the public debate in Sweden

30 https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/politiker-i-natbrak-om-minoriteters-svenskhet

and was heavily criticised by the SKMA among others.[31] The interviewee said that she "wasn't surprised" by Söder's statement, adding that the racist ideology of the Sweden Democrats shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. Therefore, she didn't think it was a particularly interesting topic of conversation and didn't expand on this. Some days after the interview, however, she sent me a text message in which she elaborated on her thoughts:

> Afterwards I thought about one thing: your question about Björn Söder. Besides what I told you about my expectations concerning the Sweden Democrats, I believe that the reason why I am not upset is that I don't have such an obsession with being included into the nation. And the reactions have made me contemplate on the desire of Swedish Jews to be integrated/assimilated, something that exists in parallel with this thing of "always having a suitcase by the door", the feeling of constant exile.

This interviewee argued that, at least to some extent, the critique expressed by some Jewish voices against Söder's statement mirrored a desire to be included into the Swedish nation. She, on the other hand, did not share this desire, but asserted that this alleged desire to belong existed in parallel with a feeling, among many Jews in Sweden, of living under a constant antisemitic threat. From her point of view, then, it seemed that the desire to belong to the majority population, as well as the fear that anti-Jewish racism might resurge, were closely related. In other words, this mixture of both desire and fear could be interpreted as another facet of many Jews' balancing between relative racial privilege and experiences of racism, or of the efforts to adapt to Protestant-secular norms and yet being a target of racism.

## Reflections from the field: the "we" and its Others

In relation to the acts of navigating relative racial privilege or balancing between positions of being included into the nation but also of being subjected to racial differentiation that many interviewees told me about, I reflected on the relation between the struggle against anti-Jewish racism and that against other forms of racism in Sweden. In Chapter 5 we saw how public discussions on antisemitism sometimes reinforce anti-Muslim racism, and in Chapter 3 I discussed how Europe's relationship to the Holocaust (El-Tayeb 2011) means

31 https://skma.se/2018/06/bjorn-soder-pastar-att-judar-ar-inte-svenskar-mattias-karlssons-ser-kulturmarxister-och-kosmopoliter-bakom-kritiken/

that Europe relates differently to the category of Jews than to other racialised, minoritised groups, sometimes implying a tension between the struggles against various forms of racism. During fieldwork, these tensions became obvious to me during several events in which I participated. One of these events was a demonstration against antisemitism in Malmö, the city in southern Sweden where I live, which took place in mid-December 2017. The demonstration was a response to the anti-Jewish racist events that had occurred in Malmö and Gothenburg in the same month, following the Trump administration's decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In Malmö, the local newspaper *Sydsvenskan* reported that antisemitic slogans had been chanted at the Möllevången square in central Malmö, that the Jewish cemetery had been attacked, and in Gothenburg the synagogue had been attacked with Molotov cocktails. The media discourses surrounding these events were explored in Chapter 5.

Demonstrations like these, known as "kippah walks" (*kippa-vandringar*), had been organised before by the Jewish congregation together with other organisations in Malmö, often with well-known politicians and public figures participating in them and with media coverage, but this was my first time of participating in one. Being a leftist activist since my early teens, I was used to both walking in demonstrations and organising them. I had participated in many demonstrations against racism, among them on November 9, in commemoration of the November Pogroms in Nazi Germany in 1938. Going to this particular demonstration, however, I thought about the fact that I had not been to any kippah walk before. The fact that the kippah walks both opposed expressions of power asymmetries through their struggle against a form of racism that is well-rooted in Sweden and Europe, and at the same time received support from many politicians, appeared as reflecting a complex and contradictory reality of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden: anti-Jewish racism is both embedded in Swedish society, but at the same time it is publicly and vehemently condemned, as discussed in Chapter 5. Arriving at the street outside the synagogue and seeing many familiar and also unknown faces, I was filled with a sensation of emerging possibilities for antiracist alliances in Malmö.

As the demonstration set off in the direction toward Stortorget, Malmö's main square, I noticed that the atmosphere in the crowd walking along was different from other demonstrations I had taken part in, including those also organised as a response to racist violence or death, and which thus often harboured conflicting emotions of grief and anger, but also of joy for being together with other people. One difference was that the participants were visibly unlike the people that I normally met at political gatherings.

Comparatively many among these demonstrators were middle-aged people, and many of them were men whom I read as privileged white people. At Triangeltorget, another square, the demonstration passed by a group of activists, who like on every other Saturday around that time were standing in the square collecting money for the Palestinian cause. When the demonstration passed them, although I could not hear any verbal exchange between the two groups, I heard some of the people around me commenting on the Palestine activists in what appeared to be an irritated tone. The notion that in some contexts there is a tension between support for Palestine and opposition against racism against Jews became obvious when passing by the square in the demonstration.

Reaching Stortorget, the invited speakers started talking, among them Alice Bah Kuhnke, at that time Minister for Culture and Democracy, representing the Green Party. Demonstratively, and as a sign of solidarity with the Jewish community, she showed the crowd her necklace with the Star of David. All the political parties represented in the Swedish Parliament, with the exception of the Sweden Democrats, had been invited to give their speeches. From my perspective, the speeches by the representatives of the Conservative Party and the Christian Democrats were blatantly racist, blaming the antisemitic incidents on migrants from the Middle East as a collective. But there were also other speeches, notably that by the Swedish Committee Against Antisemitism making a call for a humanist rejection of antisemitism, as well as that by the invited speaker from the Left Party, calling the audience to fight all forms of racism equally.

When the speeches ended and the demonstration was officially over, I stayed in the square to mingle with my friends. Looking out over the remaining crowd, I recognised two public figures: Tobias Billström and Ann Heberlein. At that time, Billström was one of the deputy speakers of the Swedish parliament, on behalf of the Conservative Party. Prior to that, he had been Minister of Migration, and in that capacity he had been widely criticised by antiracist organisations and refugee-solidarity social movements, due both to the migration policy of the government and to racist declarations about migrants that he had made. The other person, Ann Heberlein, is a former scholar, author and member of the Conservative Party, who had drawn wide attention in the public debate due to her racist publications and declarations against migrants and Middle Easterners. In other words, I had just participated in a demonstration against racism together with Billström and Heberlein, people whom I considered to be proponents of racism in the Swedish public debate and in policymaking. The fact that some public figures oppose racism against

Jews, while simultaneously promoting racism against other groups, made me ask myself what this means for processes of racialisation of Jews in Sweden.

Another experience that reflected some of the complexities as far as various Swedish racisms and antiracist struggles are concerned was a commemoration of the November Pogroms in Stockholm in 2018. One key interviewee in Stockholm generously offered to take me to the Great Synagogue for their annual commemoration, organised by the SKMA. Since November 9, the day that the Nazis called the *Kristallnacht*, fell that year on a Friday, the commemoration took place the day before, on November 8, in order to respect the rules of the Sabbath. The synagogue was full of an atmosphere of serenity, and the programme consisted of music, poetry, an award presentation and a few speeches. One of the main speakers was a well-known Swedish author, Majgull Axelsson, who had been invited because of one of her novels, in which the protagonist was a Roma Holocaust survivor (Axelsson 2014). In the speech, she made the assertion, among other things, that it had been more difficult to be Roma than to be Jewish in Sweden after World War II. I therefore interpreted the decision to invite Axelsson to speak as mirroring a will among the organisers to broaden the memory of the Holocaust to also include other groups that were victims of the Nazi extermination policy, thereby opening up for a possible "multi-directional memory" (Rothberg 2009) among various groups exposed to racism. That evening the SKMA also bestowed an award to a Swedish journalist, due to her condemnation of antisemitism in leftist circles. The importance of uncovering antisemitism within the Left was emphasised several times that evening, both in the speech by the journalist and by the representative of the SKMA. As a leftist person myself, I wondered why so much emphasis was put on racism within the Left in particular, in a political context in which I regarded the rise of the ethnonationalist far-right to be the most serious racist threat both in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. It seemed to me that what was conveyed at this commemoration was the possibility of opening up the memory of the Holocaust experience to other groups exposed to it—thereby creating certain opportunities for antiracist alliances—while simultaneously signalling that it is not a leftist political project that offers the best opportunities for fighting racism against Jews.

The next evening, on November 9, I participated in another commemoration of the November Pogroms. This time it was a demonstration organised by various leftist and antiracist organisations at the square of Sergels torg in central Stockholm, condemning both anti-Jewish racism as well as other forms of racism. The weight given to a broad antiracist struggle, where anti-Jewish racism is seen to be one among others, became obvious when one of the

speakers, a representative of the organisation Jews for an Israeli-Palestinian Peace, said that the lesson learnt after the Holocaust could be either "this should never happen to Jews again" or "this should never happen to anyone again". I interpreted this statement as underlining a universalist antiracist vocation and as a critique of struggles against anti-Jewish racism that doesn't take into account the broader context of racist structures in Swedish society. At the same time, I wondered why this event, which specifically commemorated Nazi anti-Jewish massacres, had been organised to take place on a Friday evening and did not adapt to the rules of the Sabbath in order to also include Jews abiding by those rules. Also, I asked myself why it was deemed necessary to explicitly bring in the question of Palestine at the commemoration of the November Pogroms.

It seemed to me that questions of universalism and particularism (Balibar 1991) in relation to anti-Jewish racism were articulated in different ways at all these events. To what extent anti-Jewish racism is seen to be something unique, and in that case in what sense and how, and to what degree it is perceived to be part of a larger societal picture, and in that case in relation to what and whom, seemed to be a red thread running through all of them. Different answers to these questions seemed to reflect different political positions, but also different perceptions of the nature of anti-Jewish racism, understandings of processes of racialisation of Jews in Swedish society, as well as relationships to politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011). We now turn to how some of these complexities were present in the interviews, and what this means for the possibilities and limits of politics of solidarity.

## Possibilities and limits of politics of solidarity

In relation to the topic of the potentiality of antiracist alliances, the following quote from an interviewee who had a strong antiracist identity is relevant. She told me that she worried about the extent to which it was legitimate for her as a Jew to take part in political and social spaces for people of colour:

> I am not stupid; I understand what I look like and how I can move, but I also feel that I would like to be part of certain separatist contexts for non-whites, but that can often feel like a transgression. But at the same time, I have experiences that I find difficult to speak about with white people, or rather… At the same time there is… but it is difficult. I am a member of this Facebook group, but I never write anything there, and I never comment on anything, because that would feel… I cannot do that. I am not allowed to do that. But sometimes there

> are things popping up there, about Israel-Palestine, that feel tricky for our sake. And then there are those in the Jewish community who, due to their physical appearance, certainly are confronted with racism. And then there are many looking like me, who are not confronted with racism.

This interviewee expressed her ambivalence toward what it means for her to be Jewish in today's Sweden and to what degree her Jewish identity can form a basis for a collective political struggle together with people of colour. While she argued that she was white-passing and lacked experiences of antisemitism (although I identified parts of her account as experiences of racism), she explained to me that she had certain life experiences which white people in Sweden would lack. This included both her family history of exile and trauma due to Nazism, as well as her own experiences of having her Jewishness collide with Protestant-secular norms and practices in Sweden. The above quote mirrors hesitant ambivalence and her uncertainty as to what degree those experiences of not quite fitting into whiteness would be valid enough to share in contexts dedicated to people exposed to forms of "colour racism". Moreover, her comment on Israel-Palestine reflects her bewilderment as to how to handle what she would define as possible expressions of anti-Jewish racism in non-white contexts. This confusion was accentuated by her own balancing between degrees of whiteness and experiences of being something more than just white.

Another topic that arose in several of the interviews in relation to experiences of living as a Jew in a Sweden characterised by multiple racisms was that some interviewees professed a need to establish special relations with people identified as Arab and/or Muslim, due to the political context in Sweden in which Arabs/Muslims collectively are portrayed as particularly anti-Jewish. While the desire to establish Jewish-Muslim/Arab relations at the personal or collective level was expressed by many interviewees, this took many different forms, reflecting different political worldviews and personal opinions. For example, one interviewee was involved in a project in Malmö in which the rabbi and an imam engaged in cross-religious dialogues in order to combat anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim racism alike. She talked with me at length about this project, and while she underlined that the project had been met with suspicion in both the Jewish and the Muslim communities in Malmö, she was convinced that the project was a decisive step to foster Jewish-Muslim conviviality in Malmö and in Sweden in general.

Another interviewee, who had been politically active in various struggles for social justice, told me that during one period of his life he would visit schools in his home town together with a Palestinian friend of his. While

informing pupils about the similarities in their experiences, both of them having suffered exile (the interviewee's parents had fled to Sweden from a German-speaking context in the 1930s), the purpose of these school visits was to discuss different forms of racism, including anti-Jewish racism, with the pupils. According to the interviewee, these school visits had been very successful, and he regarded this form of Jewish-Arab cooperation as a good example of the possibility to combat various forms of racism jointly.

Relevant to note is that, among the interviewees, many stressed the value of joint antiracist alliances, reassembling both Jews and other people subjected to racism in Sweden. Many explicitly also deplored the categorisation of Muslims as inherent antisemites in the public debate. In that sense, their understanding of anti-Jewish racism and possible solutions to fight it differ from the public discourses that were analysed in Chapter 5, where migrants from the Middle East were seen as a problem instead of a potential ally in an antiracist struggle.

On other occasions, however, the importance of relationships with Arabs/Muslims was framed differently. For example, one interviewee in Malmö expressed what seemed to be an urge to disclose her Jewishness to people from the Middle East, not least Palestinians. She explained that this was partly due to her desire to counter possible anti-Jewish stereotypes among this group of people, but also to understand how people from the Middle East viewed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The following quote is an illustration of this:

> But often when I meet Swedish Palestinians, I must in some way express that I am Jewish, because it is interesting to see how they react. I have never had any problem; the only problem is a guy who absolutely didn't want to discuss Israel, and that I understand, I respect that. But there is another guy in my school and who is also a Palestinian, I don't have any problems telling him that I am Jewish, but he was born in Palestine; the other one was born in Syria, and so were his parents. "Can I talk about this, because I find it interesting?" I am interested in people's stories and to understand how they view things and to be able to discuss with another person as well.

In this quote, the interviewee evinced a curiosity to see how Palestinians in particular react when she discloses her Jewish identity, as well as a curiosity to learn from their experiences and perspectives. I would suggest that the reference to the one Palestinian guy, "who absolutely didn't want to discuss Israel", which the interviewee "understood and respected", reflects an unequal power relation at play, in a context where Middle Easterners are portrayed as particularly antisemitic. While I believe this interviewee expressed a genuine desire to understand and learn from Palestinian perspectives of the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict, the phrasing that she used to refer to the disclosure of her Jewishness—"to see how they react"—can be interpreted both as a desire to challenge mainstream perceptions of Arabs as antisemites, but also as a way to challenge what she supposed are Palestinians' (presumably negative) perceptions of Jews. This impression was reinforced by the fact that she seemed to disclose her Jewish identity less seldom in white contexts, where she also often passed as white. This can be seen as an illustration of how, in some cases, the desire that several interviewees felt to establish special relations with Muslims/Arabs could fulfil an antiracist potential, whilst on other occasions the same desire could also reproduce the interviewee's relative racial privilege vis-à-vis the Arab/Muslim "Other". In other words, in a racial context of multiple Swedish racisms and where the category of Jews is balanced between experiences of racism and of relative racial privilege, this relative racial privilege was sometimes visible in the interviews when Arabs/Muslims were mentioned, while in other cases possibilities for a joint antiracist struggle were expressed in relation to the same topic.

Another example is the following quote from an interviewee who had lived for part of her life in Israel. In this excerpt she talked about a work situation in Sweden with a Palestinian co-worker:

> It was a tiny enterprise and only two of us were employed. The other person was actually a veiled woman from Syria who also happened to have been on my swimming course. But I spoke about Israel all the time. And I noticed she was also a Palestinian, I noticed that she felt uncomfortable, but I kind of thought that we did everything together, we spent lunches together, we went to the park every day and we spoke about everything. But I knew it was there, that she was a Palestinian and I was Jewish.
>
> *Interviewer: Was it because you wanted to counter stereotypes?*
>
> Yes, I think so. To have the eyes open. Kind of, "I am a human being, flesh and blood."

Here, the interviewee explained how she wanted to naturalise not only her Jewishness, but also Israel as a country, in what appears to be quite a close working relationship with a Palestinian woman. What strikes me is her account of repeatedly talking about Israel despite noticing that her co-worker felt "uncomfortable". Since she didn't share with me further her reflections on either the reasons behind her co-worker's unease or the consequences of it, especially in that very small work environment, it seems that this relationship, or at least

her way of presenting it to me, partly reinforced the relative racial privilege of the interviewee through a paternalistic attitude toward her colleague.

In relation to the topic of anti-Jewish racism, some interviewees also articulated, somehow reluctantly, a preoccupation with what they saw as an increase in anti-Jewish racism due to migration from the Middle East. The following quote is an example of this.

> I mean that Sweden is a country that is relatively liberated from antisemitism. Old forms of antisemitism, antisemitism from the Middle East, have moved here. This is not so fun for a person who has a great deal of sympathy for the notion of openness toward immigration of refugees and so on. There is the price when one lets in people from countries where there is a lot of antisemitism: hatred against Jews. But then there is, I mean, I have no… I have only a few experiences of antisemitism in Sweden. […] I don't experience antisemitism in Sweden as a huge problem for my own sake. But then, of course, when you read what is going on in Malmö and all those antisemitic events there have been, it partially feels like it comes closer to you. But there is also… I mean, when it comes from Nazi circles, as long as we have Nazis, they will dedicate themselves to antisemitism. I mean, that is their nature. But, I mean, the sort of antisemitism that comes from the Middle East feels in one way more difficult, because it is the result of a policy [asylum reception] that I support. […] In some way there is a cognitive dissonance: what is good can bring something that is harmful for myself and my family.

In the excerpt above the interviewee expressed great concern for what he argued was antisemitism spreading in Sweden due to migration from the Middle East. Describing himself along liberal lines as a person with "a great deal of sympathy" for refugees, this became very troublesome for him. He described this as resulting in a "cognitive dissonance", in the sense that while he believed that Sweden should receive refugees, he was also worried this would damage him personally due to a possible increase in antisemitism in Sweden.

At the same time, in other parts of the interview he told me about having endured anti-Jewish racism in white Swedish contexts, but trivialised these experiences. In that sense, I think his view mirrors accounts present in several of the interviews: an alleged lack of personal experiences of racism in Sweden, an inability (or unwillingness) to identify forms of anti-Jewish racism in white Swedish contexts, and an explicit worry about anti-Jewish racism increasing in Swedish society, most notably in relation to people racialised as Middle Eastern. Although there were interviewees who described alternative understandings and experiences of racism, these aspects seem to reflect characteristics about the Swedish racial regime in which anti-Jewish racism among Middle Easterners is clearly pointed out—sometimes in a problematic

way, as discussed in Chapter 5—but where experiences of anti-Jewish racism in white contexts are downplayed, trivialised or silenced. This in turn can be seen as mirroring a location in the Swedish racial regime where the category of Jews balances between politics of belonging to the Swedish nation and being subjected to racism, opening up for a variety of subject positions, wandering between identification with white "Swedishness" and opposition against it.

## Conclusion: balancing between experiences of racism and relative racial privilege

In this chapter we have seen how the interviewees balanced between positions of differentiation and of belonging to the Swedish nation. Although some interviewees gave their opinion that the situation for Jews in Sweden is "rather good"—sometimes despite their own experiences of racism—there were also narratives in the interviews which complicated these accounts of "rather good". Silence and invisibility were important parts of these narratives, as well as feelings of doubt concerning the public memory of the Holocaust, revealing a sense of a more deeply embedded anti-Jewish racism in Swedish society. The interviewees also told me about experiences of "passing as white" and of "coming out" as Jewish, of navigating commonalities with other racial minorities who are also categorised as "different" from the white majority population and who might share similar experiences of exile and transgenerational trauma, but also experiences of often being categorised as part of the national community. The complexity of the relative status of Jewishness within the Swedish racial regime, and the difficulties in understanding and verbalising this complexity, sometimes led to feelings of frustration, confusion and sadness among the interviewees; emotions that simultaneously were mixed with the feeling that "life is rather good".

Many interviewees related experiences of navigating a Swedish racial context characterised by multiple racisms, in which their position in the Swedish racial regime and their relations to people racialised as non-white, most notably Arabs/Muslims/Middle Easterners, constituted both a source of worry and of opportunity. While some interviewees to a certain extent reproduced a position of relative racial privilege, others saw possibilities of joint antiracist struggles together with people of colour, on the basis of their own experience of living as a minority in Sweden. Others, not least those with a vocal antiracist identity, experienced doubts and feelings of confusion about the extent to which their Jewish identity was compatible with identity-based

antiracist struggles, and to what degree they felt they were entitled to spaces dedicated to people racialised as non-white. The act of balancing between positions of being exposed to racism but also enjoying a relative racial privilege was oftentimes experienced as something confusing, and especially troubling when they were subjected to racism by people of colour, or in antiracist milieus in relation to Israel-Palestine. The importance attributed to Israel-Palestine for such experiences is the topic to which we now turn.

# Chapter 9: Making sense of anti-Jewish racism: Israel and everyday life in Sweden

## Introduction: linking Malmö to Israel

At the end of May 2019, I attended a workshop dedicated to "antisemitism, islamophobia and other forms of racism in Malmö", in the Malmö neighbourhood of Nydala, organised by two organisations: Hela Malmö, a youth organisation for social justice based in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas in the city, and Social Democrats for Faith and Solidarity, which organises religious members of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The workshop consisted of panel discussions covering various themes: racism, discrimination and prejudice experienced by the participants, many of whom were teenagers, as well as the importance attributed to interreligious encounters to foster democracy, and the broader situation for ethnic minorities living in Malmö, with a focus on youngsters. For a discussion specifically on antisemitism and islamophobia, an Israeli organisation devoted to creating encounters between Jewish and Muslim citizens of Israel in order to fight what was framed as prejudice between the two groups had been invited. A representative of Social Democrats for Faith and Solidarity explained that the Israeli organisation could be seen as a source of inspiration for Jewish-Muslim cooperation in general, not least for Malmö, the city often being understood as characterised by conflicts between these two groups, a theme which was mentioned in Chapter 5. I was startled by the comparison between the context of social tensions in Malmö and the situation in Israel-Palestine, which seemed disproportionate. From my point of view, however, the decision to invite this organisation for a panel discussion on the struggle against antisemitism and islamophobia in Malmö became an illustration of the pivotal role attributed to Israel-Palestine for making sense of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, and for framing the struggle against it.

Having analysed how many interviewees navigated between positions of national belonging to "Swedishness" and forms of racialisation, this chapter highlights the topic of Israel raised in the interviews. The centrality of Israel is discussed in relation both to the interviewees' Jewish identity, as well as the importance they attributed to the situation in Israel-Palestine for their understanding of present-day antisemitism, and how this related to their own experiences of racism. It discusses how the demand for "sameness" in Sweden frames the options for expressing a Jewish identity, and how experiences of racism in relation to the situation in Israel-Palestine also involve aspects of differentiation from "Swedishness". In addition, the chapter explores how the centrality of Israel sometimes restricted the interviewees' ability to identify their own experiences of racism, and it discusses the potential problems of this dynamic.

## Israel – unavoidable

As already mentioned in relation to the methodological discussions in Chapter 4, I had made the deliberate decision, before beginning the process of conducting interviews, not to bring up the theme of Israel-Palestine during the interviews. Since so much scholarship and public debate on contemporary antisemitism focuses on the dynamics and consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I was curious to discover what the interviewees would tell me about their experiences of racism, if this conflict was not at the centre of the conversation. Despite this intention on my side, however, all my interviewees—without exception—brought up Israel as a topic of conversation, in one way or another. When they did so, I adapted the interview and asked them follow-up questions on this matter. From this experience I was forced to review my earlier position and to acknowledge the importance of Israel for many interviewees, as well as of the situation in Israel-Palestine for their understandings of how anti-Jewish racism is currently expressed in Sweden. In relation to this, it must be emphasised that, among those whom I interviewed, there were very different political opinions in regards to Israel-Palestine, various understandings of the situation there, and various emotional attachments or personal relations to Israeli society. Despite this heterogeneity, however, almost all interviewees voiced a high level of frustration of how non-Jews, both in public discourse and in personal interactions, would confuse Jews with the State of Israel, making Jews as a collective responsible for the acts of the Israeli government. This is a well-known concern that has been addressed

by research before, both in qualitative and quantitative studies (Bachner and Bevelander 2021; Dencik 2020; Sarri Krantz 2018; Nylund Skog 2014). I also observed that those among the interviewees who did express a strong identification with Israel were also eager to distance themselves from the Netanyahu government (in office at the time of the interviews). In that sense, they made a clear distinction between on the one hand the existence of the State of Israel, and on the other the current administration and its policies. The interviewees' emphasis on this distinction can partly be read in light of their own experiences of often getting conflated with the Israeli government, and that they wanted to avoid my interpreting their accounts in those terms.

When the topic of Israel was brought up, I asked the interviewees why they considered that Israel was important, either for them personally, or for the Jewish population in Sweden at large. Of course, the response to this question varied greatly, not least depending on their own political views of the siutation. At one end of the spectrum, some interviewees expressed a strong personal identification with the existence of the Israeli state, as in the excerpt below, uttered by a man living in southern Sweden, when I asked him why Israel was so important:

> Well, it is, of course, a very complex problem and I have my firm opinion about it, which of course is partly influenced by my Jewish background and the fact that Israel is like a second home country to me and to many Jews, although not for everyone. But Israel means so incredibly much. And then when Israel is questioned, that implies that indirectly my Jewish identity is also questioned, from my perspective. That is to say, Israel is questioned, Jewish existence is questioned, and then I am questioned. There are so many aspects of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. But my view is quite firm. And there are many people with opinions contrary to mine, and then, of course, that becomes a theme of discussion.

In this case, the interviewee's very strong personal identification with the Israeli nation-state made him experience discourses that he labelled as "questioning of Israel" (*att ifrågasätta Israel*) as a personal attack. While he didn't elaborate much on what "questioning of Israel" meant in practice (although he mentioned that he regarded Sweden's policy vis-à-vis Israel as hypocritical), he made a clear connection between the Israeli state and his own Jewish identity, which made him consider people questioning Israel as questioning Jewishness in general. He understood this attitude as antisemitic, although he simultaneously underlined that it was possible to be Jewish and to have a different relation to Israel. Since he also felt it imperative to make it clear to me that he disliked the Netanyahu government, I interpret the phrasing

"questioning of Israel" as related to the very existence of the State of Israel. From my perspective, the overriding observation here was the deeply felt connection between the interviewee, his Jewish identity and his attachment to the Israeli state, but also the feeling that the full significance of this connection was rarely understood or acknowledged by Swedish society at large.

While this interviewee was the only one to express such an explicitly strong identification with the Israeli nation-state, others articulated their relationship to Israeli society in other terms. For example, some told me that they travelled to Israel frequently, that they had family in Israel, that the idea of the State of Israel had held an important place in their upbringing, that they enjoyed spending time and felt comfortable in Israel, or that they regarded Israel as a protection for Jews worldwide, in light of racism against Jews. Another interviewee, from southern Sweden, answered with the following to my question why he felt that it was so challenging when the topic of Israel arose in conversations with non-Jews:

> If one wants to discuss Israel, it becomes very emotional. It is such an integrated part of one's personhood, one's identity. And I don't think the outer world, or people one speaks to, has any emotional connection to Israel—or to Palestinians, for that matter. "But why does it get so emotional, you're not an Israeli!", people comment. It is incomprehensible to them. But it is my cousin wearing that uniform along the border to Gaza. It was my aunt sitting in that bus that exploded. It is very personal. Probably as personal as for a Palestinian, if you speak to him or her.

Here, the interviewee pinpointed the privileged innocence of white non-Jewish Swedes, who according to him were unable to understand the emotional connections to the situation in Israel-Palestine that he had and that he also argued that most Jews, as well as Palestinians, in Sweden had. This interviewee in particular seemed frustrated by the lack of comprehension among the Swedish majority population as to how sensitive the topic of Israel was for Jews in Sweden, a frustration that seemed entangled with another concerning the general lack of knowledge of Jewish culture among the Swedish majority population. Thus it seemed to me that the argument, made by several interviewees in my study, that white non-Jewish Swedes "do not understand" why Israel is a sensitive topic for many Jews, was also part of a broader sentiment of not being "understood" or "seen" as a Jew in Sweden more generally.

In relation to the topic of Israel and Jewishness in the context of a Swedish racial regime characterised by what many interviewees experienced was Jewish invisibility, one particular comment from an interviewee got stuck in my mind. He was in his mid-thirties, and had developed a stronger Jewish

identity, including a religious one, as an adult. When the topic of Israel-Palestine arose in the interview, he commented rather scornfully that Jews who are involved in solidarity work with Palestine are "Jews who celebrate Christmas". When I asked him to elaborate on this, he said that what he meant was that, for Jews who are assimilated into Swedish Protestant-secular norms, opposition against Israel would be their only way to somehow express their Jewishness, exposing it to show solidarity with Palestine. In my material, however, many of the interviewees who had been involved in solidarity work with Palestine had a strong Jewish identity and some of them had been actively involved in their local Jewish congregation. Nevertheless, I kept thinking about the interviewee's comment about Israel and Jewish identity in a Swedish context with social pressure to assimilate to Swedish Protestant-secular norms. On the other hand, this interpretation could also be turned on its head: in a Swedish racial regime where Jews have endured strong social pressure to assimilate to Swedish Protestant-secular norms, an identification with Israel might also be one of the few ways in which a Jewish identity can be expressed without disturbing Swedish "sameness". In other words, it seems like the Swedish racial regime, and the difficulty in openly embodying "difference" in Sweden, limit the ways in which a Jewish identity can be expressed, but that a relation to Israel (be it in positive or negative terms) is a viable way for expressing this identity without challenging societal "sameness" too much.

Again, the examples of a strong personal identification with Israeli society were not representative for the group of interviewees as a whole. Others had more ambivalent or mixed feelings toward Israel. For some, Israel appeared to be a place where they could "relax" from the minority situation in which they found themselves in Sweden, as in the quote from an interviewee who remembered childhood vacations in Israel:

> I have been in Israel twice when I was younger, and it was quite an experience—I think I was twelve the last time I was there—to have things ordered according to one's culture. And that is just so nice. A café where people are Jews, or a place where they sell traditionally Jewish stuff. When it's Shabbat things are closed. Things like that. And it is not that I am longing for it, because I really don't want a super-religious society, but it was nice to just visit it for this reason.

This excerpt comes from an interviewee who to a large degree distanced herself from Israeli policies and who declared solidarity with the Palestinian cause. In the interview, she told me about how she explored her Jewish identity in terms of cultural-religious practices, by inquiring into European Jewish history, particularly in Central Europe where her family originally was from,

and by indulging in Jewish-American popular culture. But, as visible in the quote, she also acknowledged that visits to Israel during her childhood had had an impact on her, and she underlined that in Israel she was part of majoritarian society, unlike in her daily life in Sweden. The remark, "to have things ordered to one's culture […] that is just so nice […] when it's Shabbat things are closed", mirrors the Protestant character of everyday life in Sweden—where Sunday is traditionally the official day off—and her position of belonging to a racialised, minoritised group in Sweden, in contrast to her experiences in Israel. Moreover, when reminiscing about her visits to a society where she felt she was part of majority culture, she appeared happy and relaxed, in contrast to her agitated appearance when she told me about her painful memories of racism in Sweden. In that sense, her very vivid childhood memories from Israel, as against some descriptions of her everyday life in Sweden, could be interpreted as mirroring a certain psychological and emotional stress as a consequence of living as a Jew in Sweden. Possibly, the utterance by the previous interviewee who felt personally attacked when people "questioned Israel" could be read along similar lines.

Although many interviewees said they lacked experiences of antisemitism/racism, or had only a few, the ones that they did identify as experiences of antisemitism were typically related to Israel-Palestine. The following quote is an illustration of the frustration that many interviewees, regardless of their relationship to Israel, felt when they as Jews were associated with the Israeli state. In this case, the interviewee was born in the 1930s in a German-speaking context and had fled with her family to Sweden when she was a child, as a consequence of Nazism:

> *Interviewer: Could you tell me if you have been exposed to antisemitism of any kind?*
>
> No, I cannot. Well, yes, during the War, that was of course noticed. There were occasions when kids in the street would call me things. I know that I pondered a lot on that: "Am I a Jewish bastard or a German bastard?" I have also experienced what I think everyone has experienced, that even people who are politically very conscious cannot separate Jews from Israel, or things like that. Or if I say something about the United States. On one occasion I said something critical about the USA, and then I got the comment: "Okay, and what do you say about Israel?" I mean… I think it is important to react and just reply, "Why are you asking me that?" And I am sure it is not meant as something antisemitic, but just as a generalisation, which I just think shouldn't be done. It is a careless way of talking which is actually very common.

In this case, the interviewee first reiterated that she lacked any experiences of antisemitism in Sweden (something that she had also told me at the beginning of the interview), after which she did in fact remember such instances. Later in the interview she would tell me about more cases that I would categorise as examples of anti-Jewish racism. The first instance was during World War II, when she was categorised as both a "Jewish bastard" and a "German bastard" by children in her neighbourhood in Sweden, both categorisations differentiating her from notions of "Swedishness". The second example is what seems to be repetitious experiences ("actually very common"), which she told me about with frustration and fatigue in her voice, of her directly or indirectly being held accountable for the policies and actions of the State of Israel. It is noticeable that, in this second case, she partially trivialised these experiences ("not meant as something antisemitic, but just as a generalisation"), despite her own frustration.

For those among the interviewees who were actively engaged in solidarity work with Palestine, the topic of Israel-related antisemitism seemed particularly painful. I find the following quote from an interviewee who was involved in the solidarity movement with Palestine as illustrative:

> I was sitting on the train, going somewhere to give a talk about Israel-Palestine, somewhere in [the province of] Småland. I was reading a book on the topic. And then there is this woman in front of me, saying: "Oh, yes, it's horrible, the Jews do such horrible things; they, if anyone, should really know." And then I just felt, "She is not my buddy, although she supports the Palestinians." Then I wrote an article about this. As a matter of fact, we must be on guard. Just because people say that they support the Palestinians, they are not necessarily our friends; there are also those who definitely are our adversaries.

In this excerpt, the interviewee described a racist conflation of Jews as a collective and the State of Israel, as well as of Israel and victims of the Shoah. Some scholars of antisemitism have also interpreted the conflation of the Shoah and the State of Israel as a way of trivialising the Holocaust, by juxtaposing it to the Israeli occupation of Palestine ("they, if anyone, should really know"). This juxtaposition can be seen as a rhetorical manoeuvre to indirectly blame the Shoah on its victims (Bachner 1999), since it is implicitly stated that the victims of the Shoah ("the Jews", here conflated with Israel) are as murderous as their Nazi executioners. Moreover, I found the interviewee's expression of "being on guard" (*vara på sin vakt*) in relation to expressions of racism as interesting. It can be seen as underlining an understanding of the existence of "latent" (Fein 1987a) anti-Jewish racism in Swedish society that

might pop up unexpectedly, thereby obliging the interviewee to be observant of possible expressions of racism.

However, inspired by Nandita Sharma (2015) and Anne McClintock (1995), I believe that besides this conflation of Jews and the State of Israel we can also interpret the episode above as a process of "othering" Jews in relation to a national "we", implying a process of national and racial boundary-making. While "the Jews do horrible things" and "should really know", it was implicitly stated that "we Swedes" do not do horrible things, or presumably already know. It is interesting to see how both experiences recounted above can be understood as being not solely about Israel-Palestine, but also as part of a larger social dynamic, where constructions of "Swedishness" are present, distancing Sweden as a racialised community from the category of Jews.

In the example above, of the man sitting on the train, it was unclear to me whether the woman who conflated Jews with the State of Israel was aware of the fact that her interlocutor was Jewish, since he might have passed as white. Examples of Jewish "invisibility" in relation to Israel-Palestine were present in several of the accounts where the interviewees identified experiences of antisemitism. The following quote is from a woman living in southern Sweden, underlining that Jews in Sweden are often conflated with the State of Israel:

> I have been attacked many times because I happen to be Jewish, by friends. And once we were watching the Eurovision Song Contest, and then there was someone not liking Israel, some leftist guy, who said something very stupid; he thought he was joking, but I don't think it was funny. He said, "All Jews should be bombed." Because often Jews and Israel become one, and that is very problematic. And it often feels like many people confuse the State of Israel with Jews in general. And then also the fact that it is hard to discuss with people. […]
>
> *Interviewer*: *How did you react when this guy said this?*
>
> Well, they don't know that I am Jewish, so I said: "You shouldn't say things like that." I was a bit annoyed. And then he said, "Can't you take a joke?" But it is hard when you hear things like this and you have heard them all your life. That kind of racism, and then also jokes about Jews: "You run like a Jew", all those classical…
>
> *Interviewer*: *"You run like a Jew"?*
>
> Yes, isn't it something like that? I have heard people saying that during the past few years, just like people are still making jokes about coloured people. Those kind of jokes sometimes come up. "What is the difference between a cinnamon

> roll and a Jew?—The cinnamon roll doesn't scream when you put it into the oven." Those kind of jokes you used to hear when you were a kid. It's absurd. And I don't really know how to handle it. It is not funny.

Here, the interviewee described a painful example of Jews being conflated with the State of Israel in a violent and threatening way. I see this as an example of anti-Jewish racism violently and unexpectedly appearing in the midst of Swedish everyday life, in a context that the interviewee described as loosely left-wing orientated. It is noteworthy that this racist and violent utterance was to a certain degree downplayed by the interviewee ("I was a bit annoyed"). The experience seems even more painful given the fact that the person who uttered the racist remark, as well as the people around them (she didn't describe these people further, but the impression I got from her story was that they remained quiet, or at least didn't support her during the confrontation) were unaware of the interviewee being Jewish, since she passed as white. The question of Jewish (in)visibility is therefore at the core of this experience. This becomes even more evident since the interviewee juxtaposed racist jokes about Jews and racist jokes about people of colour, thereby emphasising a sense of commonality with people racialised as non-white. Furthermore, the connection between this experience of racism and other memories from her childhood ("you have heard them all your life") gives the image of a continuous racialisation of the category of Jews in Sweden. In that way, it seems like the experience of having one's Jewishness conflated with the Israeli state occurred here in a larger social frame of national boundary-making and of racialisation of Jews as "different".

Another example of how experiences of the conflation of the category of Jews and Israel occurs in a larger social context where other forms of racialisation of Jews take place is the following quote. It was uttered by someone who explicitly declared her solidarity with the Palestinian cause. When I asked her about how antisemitism is being expressed today, she responded in the following way:

> It was during the days of the demonstration by the Nordic Resistance Movement [a Nazi organisation]. I was walking home alone in the evening. And I remember thinking, "Fuck, now they are here! Who are they? White men in a group: are they the Nazis, is it them?" So I guess you are always on guard. It is not that one is afraid of violence, but one thinks they might be coming. Sooner or later, someone will say something. But maybe not directed against me. Because I think there is a lot of antisemitism. I haven't been particularly exposed to it myself; it is more like you see it on Facebook. It is not directed against me or against another person, but more obscure. Unfortunately, often in

> relation to Israel-Palestine, which feels sad. A long time ago I would get really angry when people said there was a critique against Israel that was antisemitic, and I would just say, "No, you're nuts." But then it is there… I rarely say this to non-Jews, because I don't want to be that person. But still…

In this quote, the interviewee connects both her fear of "white men in a group", who potentially could be Nazis, and anti-Jewish racism related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to her feeling of "always [being] on guard". The feeling of never knowing when racism will pop up and therefore preparing oneself for its appearance was shared by many of the people I interviewed, and is another example of the emotional dynamic of racism in everyday settings. I interpret this as connected to the broader experience of belonging to a racialised, minoritised group in a predominantly white Sweden, where forms of white masculinity appear as particularly threatening. On top of the stressful feeling of being "always on guard", the interviewee also expressed conflicted feelings from witnessing expressions of anti-Jewish racism online in relation to Israel-Palestine. Her utterance, "I rarely say this to non-Jews" (interpellating me as interviewer), catches the pain of her expressing solidarity with the Palestinian cause and simultaneously observing racism against Jews in (online) milieus of solidarity with Palestine. This in turn had forced her to review her earlier position that it would just be nonsense that critique against Israel could be made along anti-Jewish lines.

It is noteworthy that while many of the experiences of racism in relation to Israel-Palestine were connected to a broader context of being subjected to racism in Sweden, many interviewees identified the topic of Israel-Palestine as the sole expression of racism they had experienced. For example, an interviewee told me right at the beginning of the interview that when it comes to antisemitism, "everything has to do with Israel". He also commented that it would be impossible for me not to have the topic of Israel at the centre of my analysis. Later in the interview, however, he told me about an experience he had had when he was visiting a major city abroad. He noted how he had felt uncomfortable speaking Polish (his mother tongue) with his father on the cell-phone, since he was worried there would be Poles around him, who then would understand that he was Jewish. After hearing this, I told him that from my perspective it seemed that this experience of handling the potential threat of anti-Jewish racism had nothing at all to do with Israel:

> *Interviewer: It seems to me that what you just told me has nothing to do with Israel, but earlier you told me that everything has to do with Israel?*

> When I say that everything is about Israel, then I meant… Well, of course, everything is not about Israel, but everything is about Israel in the sense that it is so damn… Israel is in some way the impossible. On the one hand, we have this almost fascist government, on the other side also the fact that this state today provides us protection. That's it. And what to do with that? What do Jews do with that? […]
>
> *Interviewer: Exactly. But then I wonder, the things that are not about Israel, what are they about?*
>
> The antisemitic things? Of course… Well, when it comes to antisemitism… when I think of antisemitism I do not always think of Israel; it is not like that. Nor when I think of my childhood. When I told you before that people used to say "fucking Jew" (jävla jude), then I wasn't thinking that those guys were Arabs. Maybe they were, but they didn't say so because they were Arabs, but because that was the way people usually spoke: "Jews and Gypsies".

In line with this quote, there was a strong emphasis on Israel as being central to discussions about antisemitism and Jewish life in Sweden ("everything is about Israel"), something that many interviewees told me. On the one hand, the interviewee strongly disapproved of the Israeli government (led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the time of the interview), which he called "this almost fascist government". On the other hand, he perceived Israel as a protection for Jews outside of Israel, in the light of growing antisemitism. Although some of the interviewees strongly disidentified with the Israeli state, others underlined the same tension: on the one hand, a political context in Israel that many disliked; on the other, a sense that Israel might provide protection against anti-Jewish racism if needed, and/or that Israel is a country in which the interviewees belong to the majority population, therefore offering a certain "relaxation" compared to being a Jewish minority, among other racialised groups ("Jews and Gypsies"), in Sweden.

It was clear that for almost all of the interviewees, Israel-Palestine was a central reference to make sense of racism against Jews, including their own experiences of racism, among those who had identified such experiences. Yet, in the interview material as a whole, it seems that, in the accounts of those experiences, racism in relation to the topic of Israel-Palestine was part of a larger societal frame and of a broader experience of being racialised as Jewish, including cases of "Othering", boundary-making of Swedishness, politics of belonging, Jewish invisibility, and fear of forms of white masculinity. From this perspective, experiences of racist conflations between Jews and the State of Israel thus add to a broader process of racialisation of Jews, in a context

where racism is dynamically related to a variety of social structures. However, these entanglements were not necessarily perceived in that way by the interviewees, who in many cases saw only Israel-Palestine as the central factor in anti-Jewish racism. It is the potentially problematic features of one-sidedly locating Israel-Palestine at the centre of the analysis of anti-Jewish racism to which we now turn.

## The difficulty of identifying everyday racism

As already described in the previous section, almost all interviewees emphasised the topic of Israel to make sense of contemporary racism against Jews in Sweden. This can be seen as mirroring the understanding, as pointed out by Henrik Bachner (1999), that since the Holocaust the public display of antisemitism has become illegitimate in the West, and can therefore only be expressed as hatred against the State of Israel. A trace of this line of thought can be found in the following quote from an interviewee in southern Sweden:

> There is antisemitism in Sweden. I personally believe it comes from two groups. On the one hand, you have the extreme Right; on the other hand, you have the extreme Islamists. Then many would say that the extreme Left is in the same vein, but I don't think the extreme Left exactly goes after Jews. Maybe since there is a strong connection to Israel, they could maybe blow up a synagogue or a community centre or something like that, you know, but in general I believe the biggest threat comes from the radical Right and the radical Islamism. And those waves have grown stronger.

In this quote, the interviewee saw antisemitism as something coming from certain identifiable but rather marginal groups, a view that was very common among the interviewees. This can partly be seen as mirroring the paradigm of so-called "new antisemitism", discussed in the overview of earlier research in Chapter 2, which is the notion that much contemporary antisemitism is seen as "Israel-derived" (Dencik 2020), canalised through three different political tendencies: the neo-fascist right, the anti-imperialist left, and radical Islamism (Taguieff 2004; Iganski and Kosmin 2003). This interviewee partly dismissed the Left as a source of antisemitism, yet also argued that the "extreme Left" might, due to its political stance on Israel-Palestine, be capable of blowing up synagogues and Jewish community centres (something that to my knowledge has never happened). As discussed in Chapter 2, this mirrors an understanding of anti-Jewish racism as a relatively marginal phenomenon in Swedish society,

since it is argued to exist only at the extremes of the political spectrum. In that sense, mainstream Swedish society is not understood as antisemitic, something that recalls the media discourses analysed in Chapter 5. Thus, the notion of a racism against Jews as originating only in identifiable but rather marginal groups, but not as a structural phenomenon inherent to Swedish society, creates the image of contemporary Sweden as a country with little or no racism against Jews, since anti-Jewish threats come only from society's outer margins. At the same time, this interviewee voiced his preoccupation that anti-Jewish threats have been growing stronger in recent years, a worry that was echoed by many other interviewees.

One thing that was noticeable about this understanding of racism against Jews was that, despite being shared in many of the interviews, it was rarely mirrored in the personal experiences of the interviewees. Although many expressed worries about concrete violent threats against Jewish institutions or the existence in Sweden of neo-Nazi groups, it seems that when they said they did not have any, or only very few, personal experiences of antisemitism/racism what they meant was that they lacked experiences of antisemitism coming specifically from easily identifiable "sources" of antisemitism. Despite this, however, all interviewees shared experiences with me of what I would label as anti-Jewish racism, but which were not expressed in relation to Israel and not related to any easily identifiable group. What I noted was that since these experiences did not fit their understanding of how antisemitism is currently being expressed (primarily channelled through hatred against Israel), many times the interviewees did not identify these experiences as forms of racism/antisemitism. When I suggested that these experiences were examples of antisemitism/racism, some agreed with me, while others said that they did not consider that experience, which for me was clearly racist, was de facto racist. An example of this is the quote below, from an interviewee who said she lacked personal experiences of antisemitism. When I asked her if in everyday settings she had heard subtle comments or jokes in relation to her Jewishness, she told me about the following experience a few years back when she had taken a course at a university in southern Sweden:

> Something happened to me that actually bothered me a bit when I took a course. We had a meeting in our study group. There was a problem, I don't know, with a password or something, so I needed help to log into the computer or whatever. So I went to the university library, where we were studying. And for some reason the staff didn't want to help me. They were very unpleasant. And then back in the study group I told the other students that the staff had been unpleasant to me. And one woman in the group said [*imitates with a scornful voice*]: "Oh! Were they unpleasant to you?! Maybe they don't like Jews!" I

found that very weird. It felt very uncomfortable. Because I had never told her that I was Jewish. And the fact that she categorised me in that way, I found that… I don't know. By the way, she teaches Swedish to foreigners.

*Interviewer*: *The way you recount it, it sounds like she said it in a scornful way?*

Yes, she was like [*imitates with an infantilising voice*]: "Oh, oh, oh, were they unpleasant to you?!" That was very uncomfortable. I never used to encounter such things before. And I think these kind of things… It wasn't directly antisemitic—it wasn't. [*Interviewer makes a surprised face*] No, I don't think it was. Maybe it had to do with physical appearance, if that is what you mean.

*Interviewer*: *But what happened in the group? Because you were sitting in a group, right?*

Yes, but no one said anything. In those groups people usually don't… I don't know if the others even heard it…

This experience, in which the interviewee was racialised, infantilised and mocked by another student, was not categorised as racist by the informant. When I unconsciously made a facial expression revealing my surprise at the statement that "it wasn't directly antisemitic", the interviewee insisted that she did not think it was a case of antisemitism. Previously in the interview, she had shared her reflections on whether or not people could see that she was Jewish from her physical appearance and whether or not she could pass as white. She had also reflected upon how this was experienced differently in Sweden compared with other countries where she had lived. Therefore, she interpreted my surprised face as my connecting the episode with her co-student to her phenotypical traits, which she had defined as "very Jewish". Since earlier in the interview she had presented her understanding of contemporary antisemitism as being rooted in the three "sources" mentioned above (far-left, far-right, and Islamism), I believe her reluctance to categorise her experience in the quote above as antisemitic/racist was because it simply did not fit into this image. The other student was not understood as a representation of the extreme Left, the extreme Right or radical Islamism. Hence, from the interviewee's perspective, what the other student did to her could not be categorised as antisemitic/racist. When confronted with my surprise that she did not regard this to be an example of antisemitism/racism, she fell back on reflections on the racist trope of Jewish phenotypical traits.

An alternative interpretation of this experience could instead explain this as an example of what sociologist Philomena Essed has labelled "everyday

racism", i.e. a conceptualisation of the way in which racism operates at the micro-level in everyday situations, in a way that creates a difference between an "I/we" and an "Other" in a hierarchical racial order. Due to the everyday character of these situations and the lack of explicit physical violence, it often becomes difficult for those exposed to this kind of racism to identify it as such, although these events are pivotal to the functioning of racism (Essed 1991). In the quote above, it also seems that the silence of the rest of the group, who witnessed the dialogue, further contributed to the interviewee's difficulty in identifying this as an expression of racism, as well as to her sense of solitariness ("I don't know if the others even heard it", despite their sitting all together). Furthermore, the utterance "in those groups people usually don't…" could be interpreted as a reflection of a more general lack of acknowledgement of the existence of racism, or lack of reactions against it, in Swedish society.

Another example of how the primacy attributed to marginal groups as specific sources of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, instead of a focus on everyday experiences, did not facilitate an analysis of the interviewees' personal experiences of racism, was the account of an interviewee who was living in Malmö. While he stated at the beginning of the interview that he did not have any personal experiences of antisemitism, he argued that contemporary antisemitism in Sweden comes from the same three sources that several other interviewees also identified. He also said that all three forms of antisemitism constituted a "physical threat" against Jews and Jewish institutions. A little later in the interview, when I asked him whether he had maybe been exposed to antisemitism in the form of subtle comments, alleged "jokes" or alike, he confirmed that this was the case and told me about such experiences at his workplace and in other everyday settings. According to his account, this was mostly expressed through comments reproducing phantasies about Jewish strength in the form of wealth and power:

> There are simple things. People say, "This cannot be expensive for you." Or when you sit in the lunch room, or not the lunch room but in certain contexts when you are talking about economic issues or completely neutral things, so to speak, and people say, "I am sure you know a lot about this." That happens.
>
> *Interviewer*: *When they say things like that, do they do it in the form of jokes, or how…?*
>
> No, it just comes. I don't think they even think so much about it. And if I ask the question, "And why do you think that?", they suddenly realise that the answer they would have to give—"Well, because you're Jewish"—is not suitable, so then they say something like, "No, I don't know, I was just

> thinking", in order to get away with it somehow. I don't think it is… in the greater context I don't think they mean anything harmful, it's just that it is there somewhere in the background, and then it comes up without them maybe even thinking of it. And then you can say that I am oversensitive, or that other Jews are oversensitive, but it is actually not being oversensitive.

As this interviewee had said at the beginning of the interview that he lacked personal experiences of antisemitism, I interpret that as due to his understanding of antisemitism as something coming from marginal groups and of predominantly being "Israel-derived", not as part of casual social interactions in everyday life. Therefore, he did not categorise the experiences of racist "jokes" or racialising comments—reflecting phantasies of the strength of the racial "Other" (Hall 1997)—through which he was racially differentiated by his interlocutors, as cases of antisemitism. If I had not asked him specifically about subtle comments, I would have been left with the impression that he had no direct experience at all of being exposed to anti-Jewish racism. In that sense, it seems like the understanding, held by many interviewees, of racism against Jews as primarily being channelled through hatred against Israel is detrimental to the project of rendering visible and fighting expressions of anti-Jewish racism in Swedish society.

I think it is also worth commenting upon the interviewee's statement that "you can say that I am oversensitive or that other Jews are oversensitive, but it is actually not being oversensitive". I understand this as an example of how the reactions of racialised, minoritised groups against structural oppression often are framed by majoritarian society as expressions of "exaggeration" or "hypersensitivity" and that they therefore must protect themselves against allegations of being oversensitive (Bonilla-Silva 2019). It is possible that this utterance was said as a means of protecting himself from such an accusation, in a situation where he was being interviewed by a non-Jew, and it can be interpreted as mirroring previous allegations against his being "oversensitive".

Since so many of the interviewees perceived themselves as lacking direct personal experiences of antisemitism, many of them mentioned to me prior to the interview that maybe it would not be very interesting for me to interview them. Nevertheless, in all these cases, the interviewees shared experiences that I identified as racism. Two exceptions to this proclaimed lack of experiences of racism/antisemitism were a couple of interviewees who were teachers (one retired at the time of the interview), who had worked in schools with pupils aged 13 to 16 years. Both of them were referred to by other interviewees as examples of people who "really" had experiences of antisemitism, since these two interviewees had each reported antisemitic verbal attacks, committed by pupils or former pupils, to the police.

The following excerpt is from an interview with one of the teachers. Before the quote, he had just told me that it was common for him to hear people in general daily life making jokes insinuating that he as a Jew was rich and stingy. On hearing this, I asked him how he usually reacted in such situations:

> Well, if it is people that I know well, I don't react much at all, actually. I don't. I reacted once, not too long ago. There was someone doing a Nazi salute in a bar. There was this group and someone was wearing a military helmet; it was in [a predominantly white neighbourhood in a major city in Sweden], it was an after-work thing. And there was this group next to us, they were quite loud, and then this one person stood up and did the Nazi salute. I don't know what the context was or what they had been talking about, but I approached him and I said: "Excuse me, but what you just did, I don't know what that was about, I don't know the context, but I don't think it looked very good, you know." And then nothing more happened—he didn't say anything and no one else said anything, and we continued with what we were doing and nothing more happened.
>
> Then, being a schoolteacher, many things have happened to me: pupils saying "bloody Jew", pupils who have entered the classroom and done the Nazi salute. One pupil said, "I wish Hitler had gassed you too", and so on. Often, they are pupils who generally are not very nice and who have behaved badly overall, but when I correct them and they know that I am a Jew, then that becomes a weapon. They can say "fucking whore" to a woman. And to me they say "fucking Jew", or "fucking faggot"—that has happened as well, they say that to other men. That's the way it is, unfortunately! [*Laughs*] So, in those contexts that has happened, and some have been very persistent, they have been quite difficult, just because I am a Jewish person.

In this excerpt, the interviewee gave two examples of experiences of anti-Jewish racism. In the first example, there is a context of everyday life—a jovial after-work gathering in a bar in a non-stigmatised urban neighbourhood—in which there is a sudden eruption of apparent anti-Jewish racism, when a man wearing a military helmet makes the Nazi salute. After my interviewee informed him that it didn't "look very good", everything went back to normal, albeit with an emphasis on the silence surrounding the incident ("he didn't say anything and no one else said anything"). In the second case, the interviewee told me about the difficulties he experienced as a Jewish teacher, since pupils could take advantage of his Jewishness in order to humiliate him. Juxtaposing anti-Jewish slurs by his pupils to sexist and homophobic slurs suffered by other teachers, but also himself, he inserted antiracist slurs against Jews in a wider problematic context of hatred in a school environment. However, it was these latter cases of

interaction with pupils that throughout the interview he more easily identified as clear examples of antisemitism/racism, whereas other examples of racism appeared more dubious to him or more difficult to read as such.

My interpretation of the fact that the two teachers I interviewed were understood, both by themselves throughout the interviews and by other interviewees, as "really" having experienced antisemitism, in contrast to other interviewees, is that when there was a strong hierarchy at play, as the one between a teenager and an adult teacher, it was easier to read experiences of racism as examples of "real" antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism. That is to say, in the cases where the victim of anti-Jewish racism was, paradoxically, in a superior societal position vis-à-vis the perpetrator, it became more obvious to the victim that it was a case of racism. In cases where this strong hierarchical order was absent, it seemed more difficult for the interviewees to identify antisemitism/racism against Jews, including in situations where they were singled out, racialised as "different" and/or located outside "Swedishness".

An interviewee whose grandparents were Holocaust survivors presented another explanation as to why it might be difficult to identify expressions of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism:

> On the one hand, I react strongly against racism, but, compared to the Holocaust, it is hard to attribute any importance to the kind of antisemitism you see in Sweden, unless you are personally attacked. If you have a conscious strategy to fight antisemitism, that is great, but otherwise, I am just saying that… I don't know. I just feel that it feels like nothing compared to the Holocaust. Maybe that is a weird answer.

In this case, the interviewee seemed somehow ashamed to categorise his own experiences of racism or racialised "Othering" as antisemitism, since he seemed to feel that would trivialise the experience of his grandparents, who had been held prisoners in a Nazi death camp. In another case, one interviewee expressed her own reluctance to use the concept of antisemitism "too much", since she was afraid that she then would be seen as "crying wolf" and therefore not be taken seriously by non-Jews. This recalls the finding made by ethnologist Susanne Nylund Skog that many of her interviewees refrained from using the term "antisemitism" to label their experiences, because they were afraid to come across as "victims" and/or as "whining" (*gnälliga*) (Nylund Skog 2006, 90). This can be seen as more accentuated in relation to the discussion in previous chapters about what appears as a tendency in the Swedish racial regime to reduce Jewishness to a position of victimhood, making the category of Jews more "manageable" and less threatening for the status quo. In that way, refraining from categorising experiences of racism as

such in everyday settings could be seen as an attempt to resist a position of subordination. However, this seemed to be true mainly when these experiences were not understood as "Israel-derived".

When I asked one of the interviewees who had talked about experiences of racist comments at his workplace to reflect on how he understood the cause behind these cases of racism in everyday settings, he made the following analysis:

> Well, I think it is partly due to lack of knowledge. But I also believe that it is due to this deeply rooted view of Jewishness, a view that is very, very deep among people, among many people. But rules and these things about how we shall behave and what is considered correct implies that it [antisemitism] becomes repressed. But when this pressure is released for whatever reason, then it resurges. What I want to say is that in the West there is, I can't say it's general, but there is a view of Jews influenced by earlier history and so on. There is a millennial antisemitism, it has featured in Western culture, and it is very deeply repressed. But in some societies, it resurges. More in some societies than in others. But it exists somewhere, and in some contexts it is easier for it to resurge. However, it would be wrong to say that all people are born with a little antisemitism; that is not what I am saying; but nevertheless it exists somewhere in the background, this view of Jews and Jewishness. And I can't tell you if it goes back to the ecclesiastic understanding of Jesus and the crucifixion and all that. It is an old cultural heritage that has continued, and with time it has become more and more repressed, but it is still there and sometimes it pops up. Maybe something like that. But these comments, these jokes about Jews and so on, which sometimes happen, what I want to say is that they are not born out of nothing. They come from somewhere.

In this excerpt, the interviewee makes a deep critique of Western and Swedish society, arguing that the modern West is permeated with a millennial anti-Jewish racism that might not always be visible due to societal norms ("repressed"), but that nevertheless persists and in certain contexts surges to the surface. In this understanding, antisemitism seems to be an intrinsic part of Western cultural and religious history and society. This analysis implies that anti-Jewish racist comments and "jokes" in everyday settings are rendered intelligible by the notion that there is a deeply rooted ("millennial") antisemitism in Swedish society. This is reminiscent of the arguments put forward by some scholars of antisemitism describing antisemitism as a "reservoir" existing in Western society (Gidley, McGeever, and Feldman 2020), as a "background bustle" (Kvist Geverts 2008), as "latent" (Fein 1987a), as an "undergrowth" (Valentin [1964] 2004), or what Lars Dencik would categorise as "classic antisemitism" (Dencik 2020). This is a different view, albeit not contradictory, of anti-Jewish racism

compared to the emphasis on "the three sources" of antisemitism which the same interviewee had presented to me at the beginning of the interview. While the emphasis on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism as chiefly related to Israel was common among many interviewees, this alternative understanding of racism was also present in some of the accounts, although to a lesser extent.

## Conclusion: the need to acknowledge the complexity of anti-Jewish racism

In this chapter, we have seen how the centrality of Israel to the interviewees' perception of anti-Jewish racism made it very difficult for the interviewees to identify forms of everyday racism that did not directly fit into the paradigm of antisemitism being chiefly "Israel-derived" and linked to marginal groups. Many interviewees would tell me that they lacked personal experiences of antisemitism/racism, although they did tell me about experiences that could be identified as cases of racism. I therefore suggest that the emphasis on anti-Jewish racism as mainly an expression of hatred against Jews through conflations with the State of Israel is insufficient to grasp experiences of contemporary racism against Jews in Sweden; but also that the dominance of this paradigm is directly harmful, in the sense that it prevents people from naming experiences of racism as such and therefore also from resisting and fighting them. Therefore, I believe that although Israel did appear as an important theme in the accounts of the interviewees, it must be acknowledged that contemporary anti-Jewish racism is too dynamic and complex to be reduced to a matter of hatred against the State of Israel. Instead, it appears as analytically fruitful to explore it as an inherent part of Swedish society and of everyday life in Sweden.

Moreover, the alleged centrality of Israel to contemporary expressions of racism against Jews contributes to the understanding of antisemitism as a "spectacular" social phenomenon, associated with the violent situation in Israel-Palestine and the margins of the Swedish political spectrum. In that way, it adds further to the common understanding of antisemitism as marginal that exists due to the strong associative connections between antisemitism and the Holocaust (Bachner 1999). Following this, the notion that structural racism against Jews is an intrinsic part of liberal Europe becomes unintelligible, as discussed in the theoretical Chapter 3 in relation to the argument made by Fatima El-Tayeb regarding the paradoxical importance of race in post-Holocaust Europe (El-Tayeb 2011). In that way, it seems that the

understanding of antisemitism as defined only as something spectacular renders everyday anti-Jewish racism invisible, contributing to an understanding of racism against Jews as something marginal and therefore hard to grasp. This in turn makes it difficult to identify everyday comments, social interactions and alleged "jokes" as expressions of racism.

In contrast to notions of antisemitism as "Israel-derived" or "classic" (Dencik 2020), notions that also existed among the interviewees, there is the possibility to understand contemporary anti-Jewish racism as essentially a modern phenomenon (without, for that matter, denying its premodern history)—a conceptualisation that relates to but also broadens Lars Dencik's (2020) category of "*Aufklärungsantisemitismus*" (Enlightenment antisemitism). Such an understanding connects anti-Jewish racism to the construction of the European nation-states and to other European racisms, making it possible to capture anti-Jewish racism as part of Swedish everyday life. This understanding enables one to avoid the notion of antisemitism as something "spectacular", essentially belonging to an irrational past or elsewhere (Israel-Palestine), or as something existing only at the margins of modern, liberal society. This better captures the experiences recounted by my interviewees about everyday situations of anti-Jewish racism, feelings of invisibility, and exclusions from forms of white Protestant-secular "Swedishness", or what Philomena Essed (1991) calls "everyday racism". It can also be seen in light of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's critique of liberal understandings of racism, discussed in the theoretical Chapter 3. Bonilla-Silva (1997) points out that a conceptualisation of racism as something opposed to enlightened liberal society renders impossible a structural understanding of racism as an intrinsic part of capitalist society. Instead of perceiving racism as a remnant from a distant past or reducing it to a lack of knowledge, Bonilla-Silva provides an understanding of racism as being constantly reproduced, for the benefit of certain groups, and thus as part of the normal functioning of modern society. With such an understanding of anti-Jewish racism, the interviewees' accounts become more comprehensible and can be understood as part of the *everyday* functioning of Swedish society, where racist structures constantly racialise people, create hierarchies between racialised groups, and portray those racialised as non-white/non-Swedish as inherently different from the white majority population.

# Chapter 10: Manoeuvring the Swedish demand for "sameness"

## Introduction: covering what is Jewish

At the end of November 2018, I was waiting for an interviewee in the municipal library of Gothenburg. Having arrived early for our agreed appointment, I had some time to kill and sat down in a section of the library where there were plentiful magazines to read. Relaxed in an armchair and letting my eyes wander across the magazine shelves, my gaze fixed upon the place on a shelf dedicated to the *Jewish Chronicle* (*Judisk krönika*). This is a quarterly cultural magazine, founded in 1932, constituting an important forum for knowledge exchange about Jewish life in Sweden and for discussions on antisemitism and the general conditions for the Jewish minority in Sweden.[32] What caught my interest was that the part of the shelf dedicated to Jewish Chronicle was empty. Instead, there was a sign explaining that if one wished to read the magazine, one had to ask for it at the counter. Since there was no other magazine, as far as I could see, that was replaced with such sign, I understood this as a security measure due to what I supposed was a fear of vandalism against the magazine.

Three years later, a subsection of the municipal library in Malmö showcased books on Jewishness and Jewish life in one of its windows, at the time of the conference in memory of the Holocaust that was being held in Malmö that fall. Due to fear of vandalism, a decision was taken to cover the books in the window over the weekend when the library was closed. However, possibly due to protests among library staff, that decision was quickly reversed (Källén Oct. 14, 2021). From my perspective, both these cases are significant symbols of a situation in Sweden where public displays of Jewishness cause such violent reactions that security measures are taken to "cover"—or render invisible—what is considered Jewish in order to protect it from acts of vandalism.

32 https://judiskkronika.se/om-oss/

In relation to these acts of "covering" Jewishness, in this final empirical chapter I explore how the interviewees manoeuvred the demand for "sameness" in the Swedish racial regime, particularly in terms of Protestant-secular norms. I also discuss how lived, vocal and visible forms of Jewishness can disrupt and create what I conceptualise as Swedish white discomfort. Moreover, I show how the interviewees sometimes experienced anti-Jewish racism through exotification, and how gender and sexuality were on some occasions part of this dynamic.

## The making of difference

Despite the fact that many interviewees pointed out that living in Sweden as a Jew was "rather good" (as discussed in Chapter 8) and that Swedish society has undergone important changes due to migration from the Global South, resulting in a less racially and culturally homogenous country (as discussed in Chapter 7), many interviewees related to me experiences of subtle differentiation, to a greater or lesser degree, between them and Swedish non-Jews. Sometimes this was experienced in relation to physical appearance or cultural and religious traditions, and sometimes there was a gendered dimension to this differentiation. On other occasions, it was experienced through various degrees of silence and/or invisibility.

An interviewee born in the 1980s, who grew up in a middle-sized Swedish town in the southern part of Sweden, said that in her childhood she had always harboured the feeling of being different from others:

> I always had this feeling of being an outsider… I grew up in a white, Swedish neighbourhood. And we were clearly racialised. Everyone knew we were the Jewish family, and sometimes people used to say—well, mostly kids—racist things; I guess they got it from home. They made antisemitic jokes. Once, when my brother was six years old, he was playing football and had scored an own goal. He came home crying, because someone had screamed "bloody Jew". There were a lot of cases like this, all the time. You get another type of special food in the school canteen, you don't go to church at the end of the school year—you do a series of things that make people see you as different. There was this guy who had come from the war in Yugoslavia and we were the only ones who didn't have a clear Swedish ethnic background, and that was noticed.
>
> There was xenophobia, and there was fear in general: "those others, the weird ones". Maybe I don't remember properly, but my impression is that there were these jokes related to the Holocaust. People's ideas of Jews were often

> connected to the Holocaust. I remember—and this happened to me several times—that other kids' parents often told me that I looked so much like Anne Frank, and also that my sister looked like Anne Frank. But neither of us looks like Anne Frank! [*Laughs*] So there was this obvious connection between Jewishness and the Holocaust in a town where no, or where there were very few, Jews, and knowledge about Jews was very limited.

The comments from this interviewee on the kosher food that she received in the school canteen and her non-participation in church at the end of the school year mirror a Sweden where Protestant-secular norms define boundaries of national belonging, and where cases of everyday anti-Jewish racism among kids seem to have been frequent during her childhood. The fact that the word "Jew" (or, in this case, "bloody Jew") was used as an invective among children was repeated in several interviews. It is noteworthy that while this is reminiscent of the memory recounted by another interviewee who was called "bloody Jew" in a context which he described as unproblematic in the 1950s and 1960s (discussed in Chapter 7), this interviewee retrospectively experienced this racial slur to her brother as much more severe. Moreover, it is an interesting observation that non-Jewish people in her surroundings, during her childhood and adolescence, explicitly or implicitly connected Jewishness with the Holocaust, and that this was palpable in her interaction with other children's parents. This can be seen in light of the role that the Shoah plays in the European racial imaginary (Goldberg 2006) and the Continent's self-perception (El-Tayeb 2011).

In other cases, the feeling of being "different" from the societal norm was experienced in less negative terms, but mirrored a situation of the Jewish community in Sweden as being very small and existing in a context without a major acknowledgement of Jewish culture. For example, one interviewee who grew up in a town in northern Sweden with a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother told me the following:

> I grew up in the very north of Sweden, where there are not so many Jews. [*Laughs*] I mean, we celebrated the common Swedish holidays, sometimes with some sort of element—maybe my dad said, "Let's do some Hanukkah", or "Let's do it this way", but it was fairly modest. With time it was maybe myself asking, "But shouldn't we celebrate this? If it is Pesach, why don't we do something?" It was all at a very modest level, so to say.
>
> But at the same time, I grew up with this feeling that my dad was a bit different. Not only because of his being Jewish, but also because he was from Stockholm and had moved to the very north of Sweden. He stood out, not only with his frizzy hair and his verbosity, but also because he was from Stockholm. He did

> household chores and things which these macho men thought were insane, like going to the grocery store, cleaning, cooking, and things like that.
>
> I can't say I had a Jewish upbringing or that we celebrated Jewish traditions, but I would say that it was still important and obvious, it was an important part of my upbringing and my family. It was present in other ways—maybe culturally, maybe as topics of conversation. My dad would talk about the Marx brothers, or say, "This and that person is Jewish", you know, "Jew-spotting". And he talked about it. And if you know anything about Jewish identity or Jewish culture or such things, I would say that he gives you, quote unquote, "a Jewish impression". So it is not that he appears or looks like anyone else. It is an important part of who he is, and then of course that affects me and his family.

This interviewee described a childhood with a Jewish father in a Swedish town without any organised Jewish community. The father, who had rejected the religious legacy from his own childhood, displayed a low degree of religious identification, but inserted Jewish elements into the context of a culturally mixed family. Although the interviewee described these Jewish cultural elements as "modest", he still experienced that the importance of a Jewish legacy was highlighted in everyday conversations with his family throughout his childhood. Moreover, the observation that his father was "a bit different" from other men in the northern town where the interviewee grew up, and the fact that he couldn't distinguish whether this was because his father was Jewish or because he was from Stockholm, is noteworthy. The topic of his father's masculinity is central here, since it was experienced as different from what the interviewee described as a hegemonic hyper-masculine culture. His father's different display of masculinity was understood as a combination of both his urban background ("did household chores") and his Jewishness ("verbosity", "Jewish impression"). This appears then as an illustration of how issues of masculinity and femininity sometimes are present in processes of racialisation of Jews in Swedish society.

Another interviewee, who grew up in Stockholm, made many reflections on her physical appearance in relation to her Jewish identity and how this differentiated her from non-Jewish Swedes:

> I spend a lot of time thinking that I look very Jewish. And that might play a role too. But I think it is mostly in my head. I talked to my elder sister, who said, "I look extremely Jewish," and I replied, "No, no, *I* look extremely Jewish." We are sisters, so we look pretty similar. I said, "You are crazy! Why would you say that? *I* look extremely Jewish." Once when I was in Paris, in the Marais neighbourhood, I said to someone I was with, who is not Jewish, "It's so nice, people here look like me." And he replied, "Okay, is that important to you?"

> And I said, "Yes, I think so." [*Laughs*] There is just something… And I don't know if it is connected to having curly hair or coming from a friendship group where everyone was blonde, and thinking, "Okay, shit, I look a bit different after all," and connecting that to being Jewish. But maybe it is about not being blonde, you know. But still that has been kind of a thing. I want to travel to New York someday and hang out in the Jewish neighbourhood, because they will all look like me. And that feels a bit crazy, but also exciting.

In this quote, the interviewee's feeling of being physically different from many others in Sweden became obvious when she was in Paris and saw people whom she perceived as looking like her. Both her memory of Paris and her dream to visit Jewish neighbourhoods in New York ("they will all look like me") were contrasted with a Sweden where blondness set the standards of desired physical appearance. Despite the demographic changes in Sweden during the last few decades, this interviewee's narrative reflects that norms of a physical appearance of whiteness, expressed as "blondness", remain intact, and that this made her perceive herself as "different". In relation to Nandita Sharma's (2015) argument that phenotypical traits are attributed racial qualities and are central to racial processes of national boundary-making, this interviewee's remarks on her own perceived Jewish physical appearance as differentiating her from non-Jewish Swedes can therefore be seen as an example of the way that phenotypical traits are important for experiences of being attributed a position of a racialised, minoritised group in the Swedish racial regime. Although some interviewees emphasised that they often passed as white, many also made remarks on their physical appearance and shared with me their reflections on whether they thought they "looked Jewish" or not. This importance attributed to phenotypical traits, in a context of societal norms of "blondness", thus seems to play a non-negotiable part in the Swedish racial regime and the degree to which Jews are differentiated from the majoritarian population. Thereby, it troubles notions—from other national contexts—of Jews having become "white" (Gilman 1999; Brodkin 1998; Goldstein 2006), as discussed in Chapter 7.

In relation to the complexity of the subtleties of racial differentiation of Jews in Sweden, and to the discussion about visibility and invisibility as far as the Jewish population in Sweden is concerned, I would like to highlight the following quote. It is from an account of an interviewee with a strong religious identification, as part of his reflections on what it is like to live a Jewish life in Stockholm:

> The Jewish group in Sweden is so small. I was recently in Buenos Aires, and there is almost the same feeling there as in New York. At least among the middle class, people think it is completely natural to have a lot of Jewish friends: "We celebrate

> Rosh Hashanah", and so on. But here we are a small group, which people really don't know much about, to be honest. And, of course, you can't go and tell people all the time, "I am a Jew", you know. Of course, it would be weird if you did that: "So what?" So here it is like a friend of mine put it: "It is like walking between different rooms." Out in society, I cannot have my Yiddish jargon; people wouldn't understand me. So then, I adapt.
>
> […] Integration is very important for society. It doesn't matter who you are. I have a good friend who is from the Hasidic community, he lives nearby, he has a big family, eight kids, but he knows how to do it. He is not from Sweden, but he really makes an effort so that people understand his Swedish, and so on. And he is at home here, he reads newspapers and so on. It is all about functioning frictionlessly in society, but at the same time without giving up, in this case, the Jewish part.

This interviewee's observations from Buenos Aires, where "it is completely natural [for non-Jews] to have a lot of Jewish friends", was contrasted with his experiences from Stockholm, where he understood there to be a low degree of knowledge about Jewish culture, which made it necessary for him to adapt to a majoritarian non-Jewish Swedish culture. The example of his Hasidic friend who had migrated to Sweden and made an effort to speak Swedish and read Swedish newspapers to "function frictionlessly in society" further contributed to his notion of both the necessity and possibility for Jews to adapt to majoritarian non-Jewish Swedish culture, which the interviewee argued that the Jewish community in Sweden, himself included, had been successful in doing. Despite the interviewee's positive description of the Swedish-Jewish population's adaptation to non-Jewish cultural norms in Sweden, the comparison with Argentina, which the interviewee depicted as an example of a society that is more inclusive of Jews, gives an image of a Swedish racial regime that is rather harsh in its demands for "sameness", allowing little room for "difference", if one is not to be perceived as creating problematic "frictions" in society.

## "There is nowhere to buy a kosher hot dog"

As we saw in the theoretical discussion in Chapter 3, Brown, Butler and Mahmood (2013) argue that the notion of a clear separation between culture and religion as social phenomena is a consequence of a secular worldview rooted in a Protestant cultural frame. In such a worldview, religion is for the most part understood as a matter of individual conscience or faith, whereas acts

or rituals are, rather, located in the realm of cultural practices. They also suggest that in "discursive formations" outside of Protestantism this separation between religion and culture doesn't necessarily make much sense, and that the line between religion and culture is blurry. Following this line of thought, this section elaborates upon how the interviewees handled their Jewish identity in relation to what I in previous empirical chapters have discussed through the notion of Protestant secularism, inspired by concepts in the literature such as "the Protestant secular" (McCrary and Wheatley 2017).

In the interviews, the Protestant-secular hegemony seemed to play a crucial role for notions of invisibility of the Jewish population in Sweden, since Protestant secularism many times appeared as setting the standards of what is considered to be "normal" in Swedish society, contributing to defining boundaries of national belonging. Often, interviewees compared Sweden's Protestant-secular norms to other national contexts with a more significant Jewish population. For example, one interviewee told me that it was not until he was a student in the United States for a short period of time in the 1970s that he came to more fully embrace a Jewish identity. When I asked him if he could explain to me in further detail what differences there were between being Jewish in Sweden and in the United States, he asserted the following:

> Well, people in the USA are used to Jews. If you are in New York, you can find these hot dog stands with kosher sausage, so that is not an issue… You can be kosher; that's not a problem. You can go to a restaurant and eat kosher food. If you live in the right area, you will not be walking alone to the synagogue; there will be tens of thousands of other people going there too. So much easier. Now, it is different in different places in the USA. I was on the East Coast. But if you live in Texas, I guess it is as unusual as it is here. But it is so much easier, because there are more people. […] But this is not so important for me, because I don't eat sausage at all.

In this excerpt, kosher hot dogs became a symbol of the possibility to "live with difference" (Hall 2007) in a multicultural society, something the interviewee viewed as common in parts of the United States, whereas the possibility to deviate from dominant Protestant-secular societal norms was understood as more complicated in Sweden. Kosher hot dogs became a significant symbol despite the interviewee's assertion that "this is not so important for me, because I don't eat sausage at all". This is a good illustration of how Protestant-secular norms are part of the Swedish racial regime, creating what seemed to be a feeling of frustration for this interviewee, due to Jewish cultural-religious practices being perceived as "unusual" in Sweden, in contrast to the United States, where people allegedly "are used to Jews".

Another example of how Protestant-secular norms set the standards in Swedish society, and the frustration this created among several of my informants, can be seen in the following quote from a woman living in Stockholm:

> There was this incident at my workplace, someone I talked to when my grandchild was born, and this person asked me, "Oh, will there be a baptism?" And that is a bit… "Well," I said, "you'll have to ask the child's parents, but that would really surprise me." There is this naïve behaviour, and that didn't come from a bad person.
>
> There is so much naïveté, this "we are all the same". There are so many ham sandwiches! Ham and cheese when we discuss multiculturalism. And that is maybe… I guess no one means anything harmful by it, but haven't we reached further than that? And it sends this signal of: "We set the standards here, we have decided what is normal, and if you ask for it, we can of course get you a sandwich with cheese only, but we set the frames of what is normal." And that kind of thing. "And if you want to define yourself as something else, we will listen benevolently to you."
>
> I mean, I think of this lesbian friend of mine in New York. She married a German woman, who applied for American citizenship to be able to live in Manhattan, and who explained this in terms of "no one cares here". And we are not there yet. This woman explained to her mother how fantastic it was for her to be able to kiss her wife in the grocery store in Manhattan without anyone looking at them with a tolerant gaze, because no one looks at them at all. And then I feel like I am stuck in a small, German town. Because people are tolerant. But power is subtle. "We have decided what is normal and we have decided that you fall into this other circle." Like that.

In this quote, the interviewee criticised what she considered to be Swedish hegemonic cultural norms, as well as a Swedish unwillingness to acknowledge both cultural difference and what she regarded to be Sweden's cultural parochialism. The interviewee added a parodic flavour to this account when she said that, even at meetings discussing the topic of multiculturalism, "ham sandwiches" are served. A "ham sandwich" thus became a symbol of a hegemonic Swedishness that is blind to the fact that not everybody is "the same" and that not everybody eats pork. She also criticised Sweden's self-perception as an inclusive, tolerant country, symbolised by the willingness to offer sandwiches with cheese instead of ham—"if you ask for it". Emphasising that the "rules" are set by cultural practices that have national, religious and racial connotations, this could be seen as a critique of a "Swedish exceptionalism" (Ruth 1984; Schierup and Ålund 2011) that portrays Sweden

as an exceptionally "tolerant" country with high moral qualities, concealing racial power hierarchies. Along these lines, the words "naïvité" and "benevolently" in her account are interesting. As I interpret this, it mirrors a notion of a Swedishness which appears as provincial in the sense that people racialised as non-Jewish white wouldn't "know" that there are people who adhere to cultural-religious practices other than those established by Protestant secularism. But the quote also shows that this alleged harmlessness conceals power dynamics, and that there is a violence inscribed in the categorisation of those who are thought to belong to hegemonic cultural practices. This account can be seen in light of Goldberg's (2001) discussion on how whiteness (here expressed as Protestant secularism and "Swedishness") tacitly sets the norms in alleged "raceless" societies, and that those located outside the realm of this "whiteness" (and/or "Swedishness" in this case) are forced to adapt to those standards, despite official declarations of "tolerance" and "diversity".

In my view, this quote eloquently captures what many interviewees claimed: that there is a form of hegemonic culture in Sweden which is seemingly "unaware" of the fact that "other" cultural practices, in this case those rooted in a Jewish tradition, exist at all in Sweden. But also that this "unawareness" isn't innocent or empty of power, and instead reinforces an unequal distribution of power between those who are included into forms of national belonging and those who are excluded from the nation through this subtle form of politics of belonging, to speak with Yuval-Davis (2011).

Another example of an account that demonstrates an almost absurd naïveté regarding the Christian character of many cultural practices in Sweden is the following quote from an interviewee, who told me about an episode when he was working at a hospital in the 1970s and wanted to take days off during Jewish holidays, and instead to work during Christmas:

> Well, I have never really been fond of Christmas, and Easter has never been of interest for me. Once when I worked in [a middle-sized town in southern Sweden], I wanted to travel back to my home town. For the Jewish holidays you needed to take a leave of absence or vacation, so I called the HR department at the hospital where I was working and said: "I have been thinking that I could work during Christmas, I can work all those days, and then I can be off the same number of days during the Jewish holidays." "No," he replied, "that is not possible; that's a completely different thing." "Okay, what is so different about that?" "Well," he said, "Christmas is not a religious holiday." "Isn't it?" I said. "What is it, then?" "Well, it is a time to gather, to play games together…" This says something about Swedish society being extremely secular. It is amazingly secular; there is nothing like it.

For the interviewee this episode was an example of what he regarded as an extraordinary degree of secularisation in Swedish society, to the extent that even a holiday like Christmas wasn't acknowledged as a Christian celebration. Moreover, the lack of acknowledgement of the religious character of Christmas made it impossible for him to change his days off for Jewish holidays, since these were perceived as "religious" by the HR department at his workplace, as opposed to allegedly non-religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. This can be read through the concept of "goy normativity", coined by Coffey and Laumann (2021), underlining how non-Jewish traditions constitute the norm in Western society, to which Jews find themselves in a position of inferiority, somewhat similarly to other minoritised groups. Furthermore, inspired by Balibar's notion of how "white nations" portray themselves as universalistic (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 43), the episode related by the interviewee could also be seen as an example of how a particularistic tradition, such as Christmas, is made into something universal. By this manoeuvre, Jewish traditions are turned into something particularistic and are hence located in an inferior position of power vis-à-vis the alleged universality of Swedish Protestant celebrations.

An interviewee in his thirties, who had adopted a stronger religious identity in recent years, discussed what his religiosity meant in relation to Christianity and Islam. He argued that those religions attribute more importance to the concept of faith, whereas his religious identity was more related to the scriptures and to religious practices. In relation to this, I asked him what implications that had for him in a country like Sweden, which portrays itself as secular. In response, he brought up public debates in Sweden on male circumcision and kosher food:

> All this discussion about circumcision, of course it is a problem. I wasn't circumcised, and my children are not circumcised. I didn't want to circumcise them because I wasn't circumcised, so that would have felt weird. But I am not actively against it; for me, that [the debate on circumcision] is antisemitism and islamophobia. One hundred percent. And I guess that comes from a secular… There are also Jews who argue like that. I think it is bizarre, insane. Or the discussion about kosher meat. There is this argument that "it is inhumane", and so on. I would love to eat kosher, if I could, if it were possible. If it didn't imply that I had to become a vegetarian. I don't eat pork… Maybe I will become a vegetarian, because, what the hell, we should all consume less meat, so maybe this is less of a problem than it could be. But, as a matter of principle, I feel I would be kosher if it meant that I wasn't dispatched to the fucking miserable frozen-food department in the kosher store, where meat costs 400 Swedish

> crowns a kilo and is fucking disgusting. And the Sweden Democrats… They don't even want us to be able to import! And I guess this is kind of a secular idea.

This quote resembles that of the interviewee who expressed frustration and anger about there being nowhere in Sweden to buy a kosher hot dog, as well as the one who contended that "ham sandwiches" are served when, paradoxically, multiculturalism is being discussed in Sweden; but also brings in the legal ban in Sweden on the production of kosher (as well as halal) meat in Sweden, which instead has to be imported, which increases its price. As seen in Chapter 1, this ban was established in Sweden in 1937, inspired by the legislation in Hitler's Germany (Dencik 2007, 22). The interviewee took this to be an effect of a hegemonic secular understanding of religion as solely a question of faith, instead of also including certain acts (circumcision) and practices (kosher food), and not acknowledging that there are other understandings of what a religious identity might be and how it might be expressed. The comment that the Sweden Democrats want also to prohibit imported kosher (and halal) meat can be interpreted as mirroring an understanding of the racial connotations that underlie these secular presumptions.

In relation to these topics, another interviewee ironically referred to what she regarded was the view of the majority population on kosher slaughter and circumcision as: "We [Jews] are cruel to animals and we are cruel to our children." In her view, non-Jewish Swedes were often uncomfortable when Swedish Protestant-secular norms were challenged by other groups' cultural and religious practices. Therefore, Jewish traditions such as kosher slaughter and circumcision were perceived as something "bothering" (*jobbigt*) for non-Jewish Swedes, and as disrupting alleged Swedish harmonious normality.

In France, sociologist Pierre Birnbaum (2013) has analysed how "pork" has functioned as a signifier in French society—since the Enlightenment until today—for notions of national cohesion. By the emphasis in public discourses on the importance of everybody sitting around the "same table" and eating the "same meal"—both figuratively and literally—in order to uphold the unity of the French Republic and nation, Jews and Muslims alike have been urged to abandon their cultural taboo of eating pork. This analysis seems relevant to extend to the Swedish context. In Sweden, as in France, there seems to be a strong connection between notions of nationhood and rejection of forms of religiosity that involves anything other than an individual faith, since corporal religious practices (such as food and circumcision) are understood to embody a "difference" that challenges the unity of the nation and of Swedish "sameness".

Related to the issue of whiteness as an expression of nationalistic and Protestant-secular universalism, another interviewee who had a high degree of religious identification asserted the following in a discussion on how Jewishness is connected with the concept of whiteness in a Swedish context:

> I would say I am conditionally white. I think so. As long as I look like and act like white people, then as a rule I will have the same level in the hierarchy, so to say. And that hasn't always been the case… But as long as I follow that, I will be perceived as a white person, you know. And then it is a question of negotiation, how much you can move outside of that. How differently you can dress, how often you can visit the synagogue, what level of kosher you are sticking to, what lifestyle you have in general. Actually, today I read that they issued a fine to this ultraorthodox family in Gothenburg, of more than 700,000 crowns, because they are home-schooling their kids. And I think that is an example of the fact that if you don't accept the contract of whiteness, then you won't have the same societal status.

This interviewee thus understood performed (non-Christian) religiosity as a key marker of racialisation. During the interview, he underlined that Ashkenazi Jews in Sweden had become "white" after the Holocaust, and argued this was partly due to an active strategy in the Jewish community to adapt to Swedish Christian-secular societal norms. At the same time, he suggested that this degree of whiteness was dependent on a restricted public display of religious identity, and that crossing that line would thus deprive Jews of their whiteness in a Swedish context. From the perspective of the interviewee, a fine meted out to an ultraorthodox family for home-schooling their children could thus be understood as an oppressive measure taken by the secular state against a racialised, minoritised group. For him, the notion of "conditionally white" could therefore be used to understand the location of the Jewish population in the Swedish racial regime, balancing between inclusion into whiteness/ "Swedishness" and experiences of racism.

A more subtle example of how the boundaries between secularism and religion are active in the Swedish racial regime can be seen in the following excerpt from an interviewee in her twenties, who in recent years had adopted a stronger Jewish identity:

> The more I approach things that are Jewish, the more difficult it becomes for people in certain contexts to understand me. People are kind, but to say that I go to… this thing that I sometimes go to the synagogue. Two years ago, I fasted during Yom Kippur, and people are… no one says anything, but I understand that people think it's very peculiar, you know.

In this case, the interviewee pointed out how secularism constitutes a societal norm in Sweden, and that embracing a Jewish identity—which in her case included a certain degree of religious involvement—appears as "very peculiar", as she formulated the reaction of her non-Jewish friends and acquaintances. In that sense, this quote can be seen as illustrative of how a Jewish identification can challenge expectations of a Protestant-secular behaviour. In this case, this also seemed to make it troublesome for the interviewee to live with multiple cultural identities.

The Protestant-secular norms in Sweden were also experienced as limiting by those among my interviewees who didn't have a strong religious identification. For example, an interviewee told me the following, when I asked him how he related to his Jewish identity:

> My Jewishness is very important to me. And many people don't understand that. They say, "But you are not religious!" "No, I am not." "In what way are you Jewish, then?" They make this parallel: if someone says, "I am a Christian", then it means being active in church or that one is… but Jewishness is not just a religion. It is also a cultural identity, and I think it has become that due to all the persecutions throughout history, so to speak. People have developed a special common culture, independent of whether one is religious or not.

The interviewee, whose parents had fled to Sweden from Central Europe in the 1930s, pointed out how a hegemonic secular worldview made it difficult for him to make his Jewishness "legible" in the eyes of non-Jewish Swedes. While he had a strong Jewish identification, he didn't have a religious identity. However, from a secular perspective, "Jewish", or "Muslim" for that matter, is juxtaposed to "Christian", in the sense that it indicates something religious, in contrast to the secular (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013). In this quote, therefore, the interviewee pointed out that there are other understandings of what Jewishness might imply, which are not captured in a hegemonic secular worldview. It was therefore experienced by the interviewee as challenging to embrace a non-religious Jewish identity in his interaction with non-Jewish Swedes. Another interviewee began the interview by asserting that she didn't believe in God but had a very strong Jewish identity. This left me with the impression that she was used to having to explain to non-Jews in Sweden how she could be Jewish yet not believe in God. In that sense, many interviewees seemed to be bothered by what they understood to be very narrow Swedish understandings of what a Jewish identity can be, but also what religiosity is or can encompass.

## Gender and exotification

Inspired by the argument made by both Yuval-Davis (1997) and McClintock (1995) that gender and sexuality play a pivotal role in constructions of nationhood, I also explored gendered aspects present in the interviewees' experiences of racism. As already discussed in Chapter 2 on previous research, in European racial discourses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Jewish men were often depicted as "effeminate" and/or homosexual and therefore different from forms of "national" (i.e. non-Jewish) heterosexual masculinities (Boyarin 1997; Gilman 1993). In that sense, gender has been important in historical processes of racialisation of Jews in relation to notions of national belonging. I discussed this in Chapter 5, in the analysis of how racialisation of Jews in media was intertwined with gendered anti-Muslims discourses. In chapter 6, analysing Ingmar Bergman's film *Fanny and Alexander*, I also traced gendered aspects in the portrayal of the (male) Jewish characters in the film, notably though their subordination to the non-Jewish Swedish characters.

Sometimes the importance of gender and sexuality for the experience of being Jewish in the Swedish context was brought up by interviewees who identified as feminist and/or queer, in relation to the relatively small size of the Jewish population in Sweden. This group of interviewees talked about what it could be like to be Jewish in other national contexts, where there was an option, as they explained it to me, to be part of seemingly less patriarchal Jewish congregations, as expressed in the following two quotes from different interviewees:

> Several years ago, I went to Boston and I visited this Reformist synagogue. And back then I hadn't been to many Jewish services. It was fantastic. There were five rabbis, and one of them was a woman. Nowadays, there is a female rabbi in Stockholm too, but still. And everything had been phonetically transcribed, so I could follow. A lot was in English. The atmosphere was open, welcoming. I was also in some basement doing these Qigong exercises with some Jewish ladies. [*Laughs*] It was so… I have thought about this service so many times. There was something nice about it, something simple. So that is kind of a dream for me, to be able to go to a service and not feel that I have to… I often feel that I have to adapt, that there are certain things I cannot say; it is often very patriarchal… But it is a dream of mine to be part of different Jewish contexts. Music… I write as well. And to be able to meet with others who also do stuff like that and who also are Jewish. I don't know. To have more people like that. Where there is room for me, all of me.

And:

> I think that if you go to the United States or somewhere where there is more life in the Jewish community because it is bigger, there are many progressive synagogues, LGBTQ synagogues, things like that, where you can talk about a lot of those things. Now I can hardly ever speak about LGBTQ and Judaism. It would have been so much fun to talk about that to people who are that too. Or to find one's denomination. Maybe to think that it can be fun to go to the synagogue together someday because it is a nice meeting spot. If I went there now, I don't really know whom I would meet. Maybe people that I wouldn't fancy at all. And then it doesn't feel very compelling to participate in Jewish life. But at the same time, I haven't made any effort.

In both these excerpts, the United States, with its much larger Jewish population, is projected as a place where it is possible to live one's Jewishness fully ("where there is room for me, all of me"), and to be able to live with a Jewish identity while simultaneously also embracing a feminist, queer and/or leftist identity. In contrast to this, Sweden was portrayed by these interviewees as a country where the Jewish community was small, relatively closed ("there are certain things I cannot say"), and where it was difficult for them to be an active part of the community in a way that didn't entail their having to conceal parts of themselves. This therefore points to the importance of "sameness" as a defining feature of the Swedish racial regime and of Sweden as a "homogenizing nation-state" (Yuval-Davis 2011), in contrast to the different racial logics of the United States, as a settler colonial society where the co-existence of multiple cultures is acknowledged. Without denying the historical and structural hierarchies and stark inequalities between different cultural and racial groups in the United States, it is noteworthy that many of the interviewees contrasted their experience of it being "easy" to be Jewish in the USA with Sweden's social pressure to adapt to Protestant-secular norms, leaving little room for living out one's Jewishness in ways that challenge traditional notions of gender and sexuality. In that sense, in these accounts there was a critique of a hegemonic Swedish self-perception of being a culturally homogenous and monolithic country, but also a view that minoritised groups in Sweden are constructed as homogenous and monolithic, with little room for a variety of subject positions and experiences.

In a couple of interviews, notions of masculinity were also present when discussing Swedish Protestant secularism. For example, one interviewee, who identified himself as an "ethnic-cultural Jew" and strongly rejected any religious forms of identification, was visibly sad when he told me that his sons by his non-Jewish ex-wife had not been circumcised:

> It was a bit difficult for my ex-wife, the mother of my children. She is not a Jewess and she got terrified when I explained to her that if we had boys, I wanted them to get circumcised. Yes, that was a huge crisis. I hadn't thought about it; in my culture that is so natural. Anyhow, I didn't really have any possibility to oppose her, so our sons are not circumcised. But the compromise was that at least they got my family name.

This points to the impossibility in my material to define a clear boundary between the cultural and the religious, as well as the difficulties in justifying Jewish cultural practices in a Protestant-secular framework. Although the interviewee didn't identify as a religious person, he claimed that the practice of circumcision was "so natural" in his "culture", and that he was therefore surprised by his wife's strong reaction against the idea of circumcising their sons. For him, though, circumcision on boys was a cultural tradition important to his identity and something that he wanted to carry on to his children, without necessarily linking this to a belief in God or regular visits to the synagogue. This account can be interpreted as mirroring a relationship between the majoritarian Protestant-secular framework and minoritarian cultural practices in Sweden. Here it is the Protestant-secular framework which constitutes the hegemonic regulation of what is considered to be normal or not, whereas Jewish practices must actively justify themselves to gain the right to exist, mirroring a situation of "goy normativity" (Coffey and Laumann 2021). In this case, the interviewee admitted he didn't have "any possibility to oppose" his non-Jewish wife, but was granted the "compromise" of giving his family name to their sons. His sadness in relation to this compromise between him and his wife was palpable during this part of the interview. I believe that this should be seen in light of the importance of ritual circumcision on boys in the Jewish tradition (which partly was discussed the analysis of a media debate on circumcision in in Chapter 5), and that it is a cultural legacy that to a certain extent can be seen as transferred from father to son. Therefore, it seemed plausible to me that the interviewee's sadness also somehow related to having his role as a father restricted by a Protestant-secular frame that made it impossible for him to carry on the male tradition of circumcision to his sons.

In relation to Jewish identity and masculinity, another interviewee, who grew up in Stockholm in the 1980s and 1990s, told me the following when asked about how he related to Jewish identity as a child:

> First of all, it is not something I used to speak about in a loud voice. On the contrary, it's nothing you speak about at school and things like that. Basically, I just used to shut up. You know, when I was a kid, the word "Jew" was an invective. Of course, no one wanted to be a Jew, you know. You see? I always

> wanted Hanukkah to fall at the same time as Christmas, so that I could say that I had celebrated Christmas. You know, my parents are from Poland, and they come from a messy home, so they didn't know much, they were not traditional, but at least Hanukkah was something to stick to. It was the only thing my mom had. She didn't really know what to do with it, but that was what she had. But during my childhood it was very clear that I felt ashamed of it. I invented strategies to hide it or conceal it and things like that.
>
> And then a bit later, in junior high maybe, it was a bit similar, but then I was also a bit tougher, I wanted to be this tough guy. But it didn't really work for me to be a Jew in a context of tough guys. So then I was Polish. And then there were these absurd situations sometimes. I had this friend who was Italian, and he started saying to me: "Do you celebrate Easter? You are Polish, we are Catholics!" I couldn't say anything. But my closest friends knew, they knew.

This account gives the image of a Sweden rooted in a Christian cultural heritage where Jewishness was perceived as something negative and Protestant Christmas celebrations were hegemonic. As a consequence of this, the interviewee felt ashamed of his family's not celebrating Christmas during his childhood, and tried to conceal that he was from a Jewish family. However, as an adolescent, the interviewee tried to distance himself from hegemonic Swedishness. It is an interesting observation that his Jewishness "didn't really work" for him in a context of teenage guys where the informant wanted to be perceived as a "tough guy". Instead, he embraced a Polish identity, his parents being from Poland. While migrant identities in general were associated with masculinity during the interviewee's adolescence, Jewishness did not have these connotations, but instead constituted an obstacle to achieving the type of masculinity the interviewee aspired to. At the end of the quote, the informant pointed at his partial failure to adopt a Polish identity, when he was interpellated as a Catholic by a friend categorised as Italian. This excerpt therefore gives the image of a series of attempts to navigate Protestant-secular Sweden as a Jewish boy, first through reinforcing Swedishness and then through adopting a migrant non-Jewish identity. Later in life, the interviewee embraced a stronger Jewish and religiously informed identity, although he also said that he had preserved a strong Polish identity, but only to a lesser degree a Swedish identity. In this account, Jewishness thus appears as being in the "borderlands" (Anzaldúa 1999), as neither Swedish in the sense of Protestant secularism, nor as a migrant identity, and with notions of gender present in this borderland.

While some interviewees told me that they had no experiences of racism/antisemitism related to notions of gender, other interviewees brought up experiences of being confronted with allegedly "positive" racial

stereotypes, in which there were cases of exotification related to sexualisation. For example, a young woman told me the following when I asked her about experiences of having been subjected to "positive" stereotypes:

> Absolutely. Some say [*in an exaggeratedly positive tone*], "Are you Jewish?!" And others say, "Oh, I always wanted to date a Jewess!" Strange things. And I am like, "Okay." When I tell people that I am Jewish, it is almost like I become a different person in people's eyes. Absolutely. […] One becomes very exotified; I suppose that's what I feel. The last guy I went on a date with told me, "I have never dated a Jewess before." And I was like, would that even be a thing? To just have to mention it, it is so sick somehow.
>
> *Interviewer: How did you react when you heard that?*
>
> I think it was weirder with the guy saying that he always wanted to date a Jewess. I think that's weirder. It's such a strange thought, that I would be different. That's it again: one becomes exotified. One becomes different from other Swedes. One is not like everyone else.

In this case, the interviewee expressed clear discomfort in relation to her experiences of being racialised in the framework of dating. Both the comment "I always wanted to date a Jewess" and "I have never dated a Jewess before" implied a racial differentiation of her by the people she went on a date with. These comments seem to be the immediate reaction she was met with after she made the decision to "come out" as Jewish on the dates, since she told me that she had often passed as white. In that sense, the quote also speaks to the pain of having to decide whether or not to come out as Jewish in Sweden, since this interviewee had the experience that people would look at her differently ("I become a different person in people's eyes) when she told them she was Jewish.

Similarly, other younger female interviewees also told me that they had experienced some forms of sexual exotification on the dating scene, in which their Jewishness became intertwined with certain sexual fantasies. For example, one interviewee told me of the following episode, which also involved fantasies about her Jewish dad:

> It was a long time ago, with this guy, it was like ten years ago. I was 18 and he would follow me home. And I was still living with my parents, and I said, "Oh, my parents are at home." Then he created this image of my dad, that he would get so upset, because he was this Jewish father.
>
> *Interviewer: Was it like an honour-related thing?*

> I don't know, but somehow it was a thing that my dad was a Jew. I don't know, maybe it was an honour thing. This was a long time ago, but my memory is that he had a very exotic image of this Jewish dad waiting at home and somehow being very protective. And then there was this other guy, who tried to say something loving, somehow jokingly, but still, he said: "Oh, my little Jewess." But other than then I cannot say I have experienced that.

Here, the interviewee understood the non-Jewish guy, who followed her home one night, as having fantasies about her Jewish father as being overly protective. Since there are stereotypes in the current Swedish political debate about Middle Eastern fathers controlling their daughters' love life and sexuality, often referred to as "honour culture" (Keskinen 2009), I asked the interviewee if she interpreted this as an analogy with that stereotype. While she was unsure how to classify this fantasy about her father, it appears from her account that her date's fantasy would be one of a family patriarch, overly protective and/or controlling of his daughter's love life and sexuality.

While in the account of this memory there were similarities between fantasies of "Jewish fathers" and discourses of "Middle Eastern/Muslim fathers"—understood as exceedingly patriarchal in comparison with forms of Swedish masculinity supposed to embody notions of "Swedish gender equality" (De los Reyes, Molina, and Mulinari 2012)—another interviewee told me about encounters with non-Jews where Jewish women were thought of as embodying (excessive) sexual freedom:

> This positive identification [of Jews], that really plays a role. Things you encounter among friends. It can be such things as one is supposed to be more talented, more intelligent, more well-read, more exciting, more sexual. More queer. "Why don't you have curly hair and glasses?" [*Laughs*] People have a certain image. "Of course, you like New York!" There is this image that maybe comes from an American context. […] The notion of the Jewess as a bit crazy, sexually indulging, sort of untamed. Or a balance between neurotic and untamed. Neurotic is definitely part of that list. [*Laughs*] I encounter these positive ones more frequently for me than the negative ones.

The images of the Jewish woman as "untamed", "neurotic" and excessively indulging in sexual pleasure contrast greatly with phantasies of the Jewish woman subjected to patriarchal control. From the perspective of the interviewee, the image of the Jewish woman as "neurotic" and "a bit crazy" was partly understood as a cultural import from the racial context of the United States in which Jewishness many times is associated with "funniness" (Tanny 2017). The interviewee's remark that she was more often confronted with positive stereotypes than with negative ones is interesting, and was echoed in

other interviews, where interviewees gave their opinion that their Jewishness, in the eyes of non-Jews, was associated with extraordinary human qualities. Sometimes this was understood as something positive for the interviewees, while on other occasions they expressed a frustration with stereotypical images. Taking into account Stuart Hall's (1997) analysis of racial stereotypes—the notion that positive and negative stereotypes, and racist ideas of strength and weakness, are closely related to one another—the expression of positive stereotypes of Jews can be seen as a form of Swedish anti-Jewish racism which is socially quite acceptable, since this process of racial "Othering" does not portray the "Other" as inferior, but nevertheless as different from the racially unmarked subject.

There was a male interviewee who had also experienced some degree of sexualisation of his Jewishness, which he understood as being merged with a wider social exotification of him as a Jew:

> In high school I got to know a new circle of people who had a Christian background, and there was a very positive… a certain exotification of Jews there, that's a bit special and is connected to Jewish identity. Many people have an opinion about that for several reasons—historical, religious, cultural, political. It's rather peculiar. I have encountered many people who kind of have a fascination, or some kind of hang-up.
>
> *Could you tell me about in what contexts that has happened?*
>
> Yes, if I go back in time, when I was a student in Paris. I was at this party and there were two Polish girls who were crazy about everything Jewish and who had been to Israel. "We love Israel!" They were non-Jewish Poles. And I was like "Why? I don't like Israel." And they were very interested in me due to my background. And then, I don't know. It doesn't have to mean anything; it doesn't need to be weird or negative. I have close friends whom I would never accuse of exotifying me or someone else in that way, but who are interested in the Left, the Jewish history of the Left, Rosa Luxemburg, and all of that. But more than that, I cannot find any other good example right now, and it is not constantly present, but it's still something I have experienced. And I don't mean it as a traumatising or sensitive thing.

In this excerpt, the interviewee told me about a variety of situations in which he had experienced various degrees of how non-Jewish white people expressed "fascination" with his Jewishness, sometimes bordering on exotification. Later in the interview, he also confirmed that he experienced the situation in Paris as sexualising. I find that particular episode interesting because it entails a conflation between Jews and the State of Israel, but in a context in which the

interlocutors express love, and not hatred, against Israel. This "love" toward Israel/Jews was also experienced as troubling for the interviewee, due to his personal opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This excerpt therefore constitutes an example, as does the case above of Jewish women imagined to be particularly sexually emancipated, of how racialisation of the category of Jews can be expressed not solely in negative terms, but also through "fascination". While this fascination has positive overtones, it nevertheless entails an understanding of Jewishness as separated from non-Jewish whiteness/Swedishness. Sometimes this phenomenon has been referred to as "philosemitism", implying a sense of (exaggerated) love for what is Jewish (Kushner and Valman 2004). As Maurice Samuels (2021) has stated, antisemitism and philosemitism share the fact that they both generalise and stereotype Jews as a collective. Reading this alongside Hall's argument, these positive images of Jews can therefore be seen as an expression of racism against Jews, concealing deeper but nevertheless existing negative images of Jews. Possibly, as in an argument made in Chapter 7 on *Fanny and Alexander*, the emphasis on extraordinary (and in the film even magical) Jewish qualities can be interpreted as an expression of fear of Jewish power, which is a longstanding trope in anti-Jewish discourses.

In relation to exotification of the category of Jews, it is relevant to observe that several interviewees remarked on how the words "Jew" and "Jewish" were used in a Swedish context. A couple of interviewees told me they would get irritated when non-Jews asked them if they had a "Jewish background" or were "of Jewish origin", since they understood this phrasing as a euphemism for "Jew" (*jude*) or perhaps "Jewess" (*judinna*). While they acknowledged that the word "Jew" was sometimes used as an invective in Swedish, they thought it was important to reclaim the word, and one made the analogy with how the LGBTQ movement has reclaimed the Swedish word *bög* (similar to the English word *fag*) for denoting gay men. From their perspective, non-Jewish Swedes seemed afraid to use the word "Jew"; a fear that they seemed to think reproduced a negative connotation of Jewishness.

Another interviewee told me the following story of how the word "Jew" had functioned in her surroundings when she was an adolescent in Stockholm in the early 2000s:

> I had a friend who at parties and such would introduce me as Jewish to new people. "Well, this is [N.N.]", and then maybe she said, "my Jewish friend", or "she's a Jew", like something funny, and I can't remember back then, that I thought it was… It was like being one of the group, and that I was special in some way. Today I would think that would be very awkward. And I had another friend at the same time who also joked about it a lot.

*Interviewer: What do you think that was all about?*

Well, I think it is…it's difficult to say, because it was only one or two people, but maybe because Jews are a group that many people don't know much about, or maybe just have a stereotypical image of, but people wouldn't understand that Jews are actually human beings living in this society.

*Interviewer: As something exotic?*

Yes, but also something funny. I don't know why, really. But there is something funny, something that people think is fun. I don't know what it is. But there is also something special about the word, the word "Jew". I have spoken with other Jews about this, that one almost refrains from saying that one is a Jew, maybe prefer saying "Jewish" [*judisk*], for example; I think that is more common. Because there is something to the word which feels…. But it is also an invective… so people say, "I have a Jewish background" and alike. There are many paraphrases, you know.

In this account, the interviewee recalled that in her teens she was sometimes differentiated as a Jew through humour, and that non-Jewish people would think Jewishness was "something funny", but also something that she argued they had very little knowledge about. What is striking is her claim that many people in Sweden would have a hard time understanding that Jews are "actually human beings living in this society", reflecting a notion of Jews as relatively invisible in Swedish society. Looking back at this memory from her adolescence, she now thought it was "awkward" how much humour was linked to her Jewishness, both by her friends and by unknown people, and she seemed troubled by the associations that non-Jews made between funniness and Jewishness—which does not seem to be an uncommon theme in post-Holocaust stereotypical images of Jews (Tanny 2017)—as well as her own and her Jewish friends' unease about using the word "Jew" in a Swedish context. Although she acknowledged this was partly due to the word "Jew" in some contexts being used as an invective, it seemed in the interview as if she thought there was another, tacit, meaning in the word that she couldn't fully explain to herself.

In another part of the interview, the same interviewee also made the observation that people often seemed uncomfortable when she told them that her name was Jewish. She explained this by arguing that when she mentioned that she was Jewish, non-Jews in Sweden would think of the Holocaust:

*Interviewer: Why do people get uncomfortable when you tell them your name is Jewish?*

> Well, you know, it happens quite often that I get questions about my name, and then it's just something like: "Oh, really, so exciting, what a beautiful name! Where does it come from?" And then I feel, or I reply, "Yes, it's Hebrew," and then I think that sounds a bit weird. "Yes, it's Jewish," then people understand better, and sometimes it stops there, but often people go on: "Oh, but are you Jewish?" And then I reply, "Yes, but my dad…" And sometimes complete strangers come to me, people whom I meet for the very first time, and I am standing there telling them, maybe willingly, but it is almost automatised: so I am telling them things about my family, and I know almost nothing about the person I am talking to. But why do they get uncomfortable? Well, I think there is something happening when you say the word "Jew"; it is just like "HOLOCAUST" [*emphasising the word*]. Now, maybe I am contributing to this idea by being that Jew who speaks about the Holocaust, but there is something to it. I think about the Holocaust a lot. But there is also this insecurity about what people are "allowed" to say. There is so much insecurity of how to talk about Jewish topics and antisemitism. I think that is what happens a lot, or that this explains why people get so insecure.

There are several things to discuss in this very rich quote. First, the inability of white non-Jewish Swedes to "understand" or "read" the informant's Jewishness, and her experienced need to explain her family background to complete strangers in order to render herself intelligible. The majority population's "desire to know" is reminiscent of how people of colour are requested to "explain" their names and/or backgrounds to white people (Eddo-Lodge 2018). Second, there is the emphasis that non-Jewish Swedes express what the interviewee interpreted as discomfort when she discloses that her name is Jewish. She argued that this happened because people in Sweden would associate anything that has to do with Jews with the Holocaust. This is furthermore emphasised by what the interviewee argued was an inability in Sweden to talk about topics surrounding the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Jewishness in general. Third, there is also the interviewee blaming herself, since she said that was contributing to what she argued is a stereotypical image of Jews always talking about the Holocaust. Since reflecting on and talking about the Holocaust was something that was important for her, not least during her adolescence in order to handle her family trauma and exile, this guilt seemed particularly accentuated in her interaction with non-Jewish white Swedes. She also told me that when she was younger, she often felt the need to talk a lot about the Holocaust, something that would make her non-Jewish friends either uncomfortable or make herself feel weird in relation to those without similar experiences of generational transference of trauma. In that sense, the issue of her name and her Jewish identity would in several ways

force non-Jews to think about the Holocaust, and thereby cause them discomfort, according to the interviewee.

Possibly, the two very different reactions to Jewishness that the interviewee experienced among non-Jews in Sweden—humour and a feeling of unease—could be seen as interconnected. Humour can be understood as a means through which non-Jews in Sweden handle the memory of the Holocaust, when confronted with the descendants of Holocaust survivors, and feelings of unease as another means. From that perspective, both humour and discomfort can be understood as two intimately connected expressions of how non-Jewish Swedes react to talk about, or even just associations to, the Holocaust, at least in the experience of this interviewee.

Some interviewees also told me about the fear they sometimes felt about being recognised as Jews in public. For example, one interviewee living in Stockholm told me that he would automatically hide his necklace with the Star of David beneath his clothes each time he entered a small shop, fearing that otherwise he would be interpellated as Jewish. Swedish ethnographer Susanne Nylund Skog (2006) also found that many of her Jewish interviewees were hesitant to publicly display a necklace with the Star of David, and she saw this in light of the fact that many of them otherwise passed as white. When I asked my interviewee what the fear of being recognised as Jewish in public consisted of, he answered:

> I guess one is afraid of being confronted, you know, to be questioned, spoken to. Where does the actual fear begin, and where does shame stop? What should one actually fear, and what is internalised disgust? But I can be afraid in general of people knowing that I'm a Jew. I mean, I never tell people. Why don't I? I mean, it happens that people ask me all the time where I am from. And I very rarely say that I am a Jew, even today. It comes; it can come after a while. One tries to evaluate the situation. I guess that the fear is never about getting punched in my face, but I guess that it's about a fear of a changed tone, that the conversation will change, that this person might be mean to me in different ways. It's like… not that it would turn into a conversation about Israel-Palestine, but rather that there would be a weird atmosphere. [*Laughs*] And that can go in both directions. I was in Borås once, and I guess there has never been a Jew in Borås before. And then people said, "Are you a Jew? How exciting!" And I would never… I mean, that is not what I am afraid of.

In this excerpt, the interviewee talked about his fear of being "out" as a Jew (Freedman 2003). Once again, this is an important difference between anti-Jewish racism and many other forms of racism in Sweden, such as anti-Black racism, in the sense that many of the interviewees could oftentimes "pass" as

white, as they would not immediately be categorised as Jewish. While this sometimes constituted a form of protection against racism and involuntary categorisation, it also implied that many of the interviewees were confronted with the obligation to "choose" in what contexts they would or would not be open about their Jewish identity. Therefore, it is interesting how the interviewee understood what he actually was afraid of. While he wasn't worried about physical violence (something he had feared in his younger teens), he was more worried that his being openly Jewish with people he didn't know very well would create a "weird atmosphere" and that the tone of the conversation with non-Jewish interlocutors would change. This is reminiscent of the other interviewee who experienced that she became "a different person" in the eyes of her interlocutors when she disclosed her Jewishness. In that sense, by not "coming out" as Jewish, he protected himself from subtle forms of racialisation in everyday interactions, but possibly also from creating discomfort among non-Jews, although he also shared experiences of having his Jewishness read in exaggeratedly positive overtones ("how exciting!"). In this context, the town of Borås in western Sweden, which actually had a considerable Jewish community after World War II (something of which the interviewee was unaware), constituted an example of a parochial Swedishness that has never encountered Jewishness and that reacts to it by exotifying it. Although the interviewee stated that this kind of positive stereotype was not what he was afraid of, it nevertheless points to the racial dynamics at play of not knowing how a non-Jewish interlocutor would react if his Jewish identity were disclosed, and the insecurity of not knowing in what way this would change the conversation and the social interaction.

## Conclusion: Swedish white discomfort

In this chapter, we have seen different ways in which the interviewees in my sample handled and experienced the pressure of Swedish "sameness". While some declared that being a Jew in today's Sweden was fairly unproblematic in general, others conveyed experiences of racial differentiation which disrupted their everyday life and troubled the way they were perceived by others, as well as experiences of silence and of concealing one's Jewish identity. Notably, this racial differentiation was visible as far as Protestant-secular norms (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013) were concerned. Since these norms were understood to govern life in Sweden, Jewishness was categorised as "different" in relation to these forms of Swedishness, in the narratives of the interviewees.

This in turn gives the image of the boundaries of "Swedishness" to be narrow and therefore hard to fit into. For many, this led to feelings of frustration and of not being properly understood by non-Jewish Swedes. On many occasions, the interviewees had to choose whether to "come out" as Jewish or to pass as white Swedes. We also saw how some interviewees reflected on the reactions they were met with when they did "come out" as Jewish, ranging from positive or exotifying reactions to feelings of discomfort among non-Jews. Sometimes these exotifying reactions appeared as sexualising and were embedded with gendered notions of race.

From the stories told by my interviewees, it thus seems that in Sweden as a "racialised community" (Sharma 2015), Jewishness disrupts Swedish "sameness" (Gullestad 2002) in one way or another. Challenging the homogenising logic of the Swedish nation-state, Jewishness can appear as "bothering" (*jobbig*) for non-Jewish Swedes, as one interviewee put it, causing reactions of Swedish white discomfort, while on other occasions it appears as something "funny", and still on other occasions it is reduced to a status of victimhood. Also, we saw how the categories of gender and sexuality were part of this dynamic, both in relation to Protestant-secular norms (such as the example of circumcision), but also in processes of exotifying the interviewees. In other words, it seems like the "Protestant secular" (McCrary and Wheatley 2017) constitutes a fundamental ingredient in the definition of Swedish national boundaries of belonging, but also that the relative racial privilege of the interviewees and the option to conceal one's Jewishness lead to particular problems for their experience of the Swedish racial regime.

# Chapter 11: Concluding discussion: Anti-Jewish racism as an intrinsic part of the Swedish racial regime

## Introduction

This concluding discussion begins with a short synthesis of central results in the analysis of the empirical material, whereafter I discuss how this relates to previous research on antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism, and how the analytical perspective that I have worked with in this thesis relates to other understandings of anti-Jewish racism. Thereafter, I identify three specificities of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime, and discuss what they can tell us about the racial regime at large. I end the chapter with a few notes on the possibilities of change towards a more antiracist future.

## Synthesis: the dynamics of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime

Through these chapters, I have discussed the complexity of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime through an analysis of the empirical material, covering a variety of themes. I have suggested that anti-Jewish racism has been affected by the historical changes in the racial regime that are the consequence of increased migration to Sweden from the Global South. This migration has rendered Swedish society less homogenous in racial, cultural, religious and phenotypical terms, seriously challenging the demand for "sameness" (Gullestad 2002) as a defining feature of the racial regime. A visibly more heterogeneous society, as well as the struggles of these categories of people and those in solidarity with them, has lowered the social pressure to adapt to Protestant-secular norms of living, opening up for demands for positive recognition of "difference". Despite the success of ethnonationalist political

forces, Swedish society is already multicultural with diverse forms of conviviality (Gilroy 2006), which means that, for many, the "invisibility" of "difference" no longer appears as a desirable social goal. Despite the decreased pressure to be "invisible", a more heterogenous Sweden has also meant that the Jewish population has become understood as "whiter" in relative terms, and therefore to a certain degree less visible. As a consequence of this, the differences between Jews as a racialised, minoritised group and the white majority population can be experienced as "minimal", unlike other groups subjected to racism in Sweden, whose alleged "difference" from the majority population is instead both created and emphasised.

The ability to pass (often, but not always) as white, as well as the lack of direct forms of racist exploitation on the labour market, substantially differentiates anti-Jewish racism from many other racisms in the Swedish racial regime. In addition to that, the category of Jews is discursively inserted in a triangular relation with the categories of Muslims and white Protestant-secular "Swedishness". By analogy with homonationalism and femonationalism, what I have called "national philosemitism" means that Jews are categorised as in need of protection from a violent Muslim "Other". Besides reinforcing anti-Muslim racism, this means that Sweden is portrayed as a country without inherent forms of anti-Jewish racism—adding to notions of "Swedish exceptionalism" (Ruth 1984) and the country's allegedly outstanding moral qualities—rendering forms of anti-Jewish racism in everyday situations invisible. The emphasis on the situation in Israel-Palestine as the singular or central perspective through which to make sense of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden contributes decisively to this picture, making it hard to address instances of anti-Jewish racism occurring in the midst of everyday life in Sweden, with little or no relation to Israel-Palestine. In that sense, it places serious limitations to the struggle against anti-Jewish racism.

The images of a "caring" Sweden and the category of Jews in need of protection reflects a racial relation in which Jews and what is Jewish appear as more "tolerable" or "manageable" within the Swedish racial regime when presented as victims, under threat, or as dead. A living, pluralistic, and contradictory Jewishness and the practice of Jewish cultural-religious traditions are more likely to be perceived as problematic for the Protestant-secular order and national "sameness", creating instances of Swedish white discomfort. In that sense, the category of Jews seems to be caught within the ambivalence of inclusion into "Swedishness", but at the same time having its "Swedishness" conditional, in the sense that national "belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011) is dependent on subordination to Protestant secularism, and on a context in which the Muslim "Other" is located as outside the nation, as a threat.

# Changing the perspective on anti-Jewish racism

The analysis in these chapters, based on an approach to anti-Jewish racism as a relational phenomenon (Goldberg 2009a), and with a focus on everyday forms of racism (Essed 1991), were framed within the tradition of critical race studies, understanding anti-Jewish racism as a structural, modern and dynamic phenomenon, dependent on conflicting interests of power (Bonilla-Silva 1997). As seen in Chapter 2, there has been research on anti-Jewish racism in Sweden that invites a structural understanding of this social phenomenon, but that has not addressed anti-Jewish racism as part of a larger racial reality. Instead, research has often been based on conceptualisations of anti-Jewish racism as "classic antisemitism" or "Israel-derived" (Dencik 2020), both emphasising that antisemitism is essentially different from other forms of racism, making a relational approach to anti-Jewish racism problematic.

The analytical perspective that I have applied in this dissertation, i.e. centring the analytical gaze on the Swedish racial regime, has the advantage of opening up for an analysis of the dynamic and complex relationship between anti-Jewish racism, other racisms, constructions of Swedish nationhood, and articulations of national belonging in Sweden. By locating the nation and the drawing of national boundaries of "belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011) at the centre of the analysis, I have been able to study anti-Jewish racism as a structural and dynamic part of contemporary Swedish society, intertwined with notions of "Swedishness", "Swedish exceptionalism" as a hegemonic nationalistic ideology, and other forms of structural racism in Sweden. Inspired by feminist scholarship, it has also been possible to explore some connections between the categories of gender and sexuality for contemporary anti-Jewish racism, particularly in relation to racist phantasies about Jews, but also the importance of the category of religion for boundary-drawing between "Swedishness" and its multiple "Others". Highlighting the continuity between Protestantism as a particular cultural formation and the universalist ideology of secularism (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013), it has also been possible to explore the ambivalent relation of the category of Jews to hegemonic forms of a Swedish "sameness", in which Protestant-secular norms are pivotal. This has opened up for exploring both commonalities and differences between racialisation of Jews and of other minoritised groups.

Thus, by exploring anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime at the crossroads of discourses (Chapter 5), in an example from the realm of culture (Chapter 6) and experiences of living in Sweden as a Jew (Chapters 7–10), the dissertation contributes to scholarship in various ways. It speaks to the field of critical race studies and to studies of racism in Sweden in the sense that it

broadens the field to include contemporary anti-Jewish racism, breaking the division of labour between studies of racism and studies of antisemitism. It shows that anti-Jewish racism can be conceptualised as an inherent part of the Swedish racial regime, with a complex relationship to both hegemonic notions of "Swedishness" and other racisms. It demonstrates that, among those who have experienced anti-Jewish racism, there are important insights and knowledge about the nature of the Swedish racial regime which are relevant for further studies of racism in Sweden at large.

The dissertation also speaks to previous studies on antisemitism in contemporary Sweden, in particular those which have explored experiences of antisemitism. By making an analytical point of the fact that many interviewees said they had no or few experiences of antisemitism—something that also Susanne Nylund Skog (2006) has observed—but nevertheless shared experiences of what I would label as racism, particularly in everyday situations, it is possible to see how anti-Jewish racism contributes to structure the Swedish racial regime and hegemonic notions of national belonging. The difficulty among many to identify forms of anti-Jewish racism is possible to analyse as a result of the social context in which the situation in Israel-Palestine is attributed singular attention in public discussions about antisemitism, rendering other forms of everyday anti-Jewish racism invisible. The thesis also adds to explorations of the public display of Jewish visibility (Anders Wigerfelt and Wigerfelt 2016; Sarri Krantz 2018; Nylund Skog 2014), including discussions about when and how it is possible to wear Jewish symbols such as the Star of David and the kippah in public. By locating these discussions in a racial context in Sweden, in which historically there has been a strong social pressure on the Jewish population to "adapt" by being "invisible", it is possible to see that today's less homogenous Sweden, where other racialised, minoritised groups publicly display their "difference" from Swedish "sameness", opens up for demands among Jews for a public presence and visibility.

The analysis of anti-Jewish racism in everyday situations and in relation to hegemonic notions of Swedishness also speaks to historical studies of antisemitism in Sweden, which directly or indirectly understand anti-Jewish racism as a structural phenomenon in Sweden, not least in relation to processes of national boundary-drawing (Blomqvist 2017; Kvist Geverts 2008; Carlsson 2004; Andersson 2000). The dissertation suggests that, by opening up the field of antisemitism in Sweden to embrace an analysis of how antisemitism is part of a larger racial Swedish reality, new insights into the workings of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden can be provided.

In that sense, the perspective on anti-Jewish racism applied in this thesis offers opportunities for both dialogue and conflict with other approaches to the phenomenon of antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism in the field of antisemitism studies. The dissertation's perspective *shares perspectives* with approaches that analyse antisemitism in relation to aspects of modernity at large, not least the modern state and ideas of nationhood, and of course with an understanding of racism as a structural phenomenon in modern society. It *shares some elements* with approaches that emphasise the "classic" nature of antisemitism, understand it as permeating society, and regard it as an often "latent" but occasionally appearing phenomenon. To the extent that these approaches acknowledge that anti-Jewish racism is entangled with other forms of racism, I believe there can be a fruitful dialogue between such a perspective and the analysis put forward in this dissertation.

However, the analysis of the thesis *contradicts* approaches to antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism that reduce antisemitism to the "extremes" of modern Swedish society, locate it elsewhere (the Middle East) or among those in Sweden who are thought to embody "elsewhere" (Middle Easterners/ Muslims/Arabs), or that essentially believe anti-Jewish racism to be a remnant from a distant past and/or a consequence of a lack of knowledge—reducing it to a marginal phenomenon. Needless to say, the analysis in this thesis *does not* contradict an understanding of anti-Jewish racism as *also* existing in the Middle East, as *also* expressed in relation to the situation in Israel-Palestine, that it *also* existed prior to the modern state and inventions of "Swedishness", and that it is *also* expressed through conspiracy theories. But the perspective applied in this thesis shows that by shifting the gaze on anti-Jewish racism from "there and then" to "here and now" and by exploring it in relation to processes of boundary-making of "Swedishness", in everyday situations, analyses of anti-Jewish racism as a contemporary social phenomenon that is structural in Swedish society can be made.

Ultimately, inscribing myself in a tradition of feminist scholarship and a broad tradition of critical theory, I regard one's choice of perspective to be a political choice. The perspective applied in this thesis captures forms of "everyday racism" against Jews in Sweden, and simultaneously opens up for insights into the project of combatting both anti-Jewish racism and other forms of racism in Sweden.

# What are the specificities of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime?

The analysis of the different materials, with the interview material at the centre, draws the contours of the specificities of anti-Jewish racism within the frames of the Swedish racial regime. The analyses have pointed towards three such specific aspects of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, which also reveal particular features of the Swedish racial regime.

## It implies a position of ambivalence

One of the defining features of contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden is that it locates the category of Jews in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, the category of Jews is partly included into a white "Swedishness" and forms of national belonging. On the other hand, the category of Jews is also differentiated from notions of "Swedishness", particularly in relation to Protestant-secular norms, but sometimes also in relation to phenotypical traits defined by white/blond standards. Hence, the US notion that Jews have "become white" (Brodkin 1998; Goldstein 2006)—similar to the descendants of other European migrants—is not fully mirrored in the Swedish case, where the homogenising logic of the Swedish nation-state seems to work differently than in a multicultural US nation with a different racial history from Sweden's. In Sweden, the importance attributed to the notion of "sameness", for which belonging to a Protestant-secular tradition is partly defining, means that the category of Jews has not been positioned as unequivocally belonging to the nation, despite the efforts among the Jewish population, Swedish official declarations condemning antisemitism/racism against Jews, and the fact that overt anti-Jewish racism has become illegitimate since the Holocaust (Bachner 1999).

An aspect of this ambivalent position implies that Jews do not suffer from discrimination in the labour and housing markets in Sweden, which is probably one of the reasons why scholars of racism in Sweden have rarely analysed contemporary anti-Jewish racism. As one interviewee put it: "We have a rather good life, but it [antisemitism/racism] hits you from time to time", mirroring a sense among many of the interviewees that racism did not often constitute a major problem in their everyday life, but that they nevertheless also had the feeling that anti-Jewish racism was somehow there in the background—as a "background bustle" (Kvist Geverts 2008). Another aspect of this ambivalent position is what many interviewees expressed as their possibility to "pass as white" by not publicly displaying their Jewishness. While this certainly implies

a relative racial privilege in relation to many other groups subjected to racism, the fact that many interviewees had to actively choose whether or not they wanted to "come out" as Jewish in certain contexts (Freedman 2003) also implies a specific form of pain, in the sense one has to "be on guard" and evaluate whether or not it would be safe to disclose one's Jewish identity. Being able to pass as white also seems to make anti-Jewish racism more intangible, since it can sometimes be evaded simply by not revealing one's identity and therefore be read as belonging to the white non-Jewish majoritarian population. At the same time, when the interviewees did "come out" as Jewish or expressed their Jewishness publicly, this disrupted Swedish Protestant-secular "sameness" and created forms of Swedish white discomfort, rendering the category of Jews "bothering" (*jobbiga*), as one interviewee put it.

The ambivalence of the location of the category of Jews in the Swedish racial regime also explains the complexity that several interviewees with an antiracist identity expressed in relation to groups subjected to other forms of racism. These interviewees said that they felt both a certain commonality with non-white people due to some similar experiences, but also that they were afraid of taking up too much space in antiracist settings and of reproducing racism against other groups if they brought up anti-Jewish racism in public, because of their relative racial privilege. In light of this, some interviewees also seemed particularly hurt when they were subjected to racism by other people subjected to racism.

The analysis of the empirical material therefore gives the image of a Swedish racial regime where there is a continuous racial differentiation of the category of Jews from notions of "Swedishness". At the same time, it shows both the narrowness and the fragility of Swedish "sameness", and that those located at its margins can quite easily be excluded from "Swedishness", both subtly and overtly, in everyday settings. In particular, the frustration among many interviewees concerning the persistence of anti-Jewish racism in Sweden, despite what they described as the efforts of many in the Jewish population to "adapt" to "Swedishness" and to Protestant-secular norms, contributes to the image of a "Swedishness" that is extremely narrow in its boundaries, in sharp contrast to a hegemonic Swedish national self-image as universal, progressive and internationalist.

## It exists in a context of Swedish "care" for the Jewish "Other"

Another particularity of anti-Jewish racism in the Swedish racial regime is that it is met with a high degree of rejection by the state and core political actors, unlike other forms of racism in Sweden. This is the case when the Prime

Minister says that "antisemitism is un-Swedish" (Orrenius Oct. 30, 2019), or as I described in my field notes in Chapter 8, when politicians who otherwise make racist interventions in the public debate and enact racist political agendas strongly reject antisemitism and demonstrate against it. As an interviewee described it: "the state is somehow on our side", something which he understood to be a consequence of political victories won by the Jewish population in its struggle to ensure that political decision-makers strongly condemn hatred and racism against Jews.

This phenomenon, which could be labelled as a form of Swedish "care" for the Jewish "Other", or as a "national philosemitism", is paradoxical. On the one hand, this level of "care" is indeed something positive, in the sense that it mitigates racism against Jews. It could also be seen as something that other groups exposed to racism would aspire to. On the other hand, this "care" could also be read through a more critical lens, questioning the reason behind it and critically examining the consequences of it for both anti-Jewish racism and racism in Sweden more generally. Partly, the Swedish "care" for the Jewish "Other" can be read along the lines suggested by El-Tayeb (2011) of a post-WWII hegemonic European self-image, in which Europe distances itself from its genocide of European Jews—a distance which implies that in hegemonic discourses today's Europe is understood to be intrinsically non-antisemitic. This also fits into hegemonic notions of "Swedish exceptionalism", in which Sweden is portrayed as a progressive and non-racist nation, embodying universal values (Ruth 1984), and which also, allegedly, was innocent during the Holocaust. But as argued in Chapter 5, this "care" paradoxically also implies a process of boundary-making between a Swedish national "self" and the Jewish "Other", in which a distance is enacted between the two. Through this "care", the category of Jews is therefore paradoxically located in an inferior position to the Swedish nation. Moreover, the discursive emphasis that antisemitism is a threat against "everyone" and against Sweden as a whole suggests a trivialisation of the suffering of those actually subjected to anti-Jewish racism, and implies that this suffering is instrumentalised for the reproduction of Sweden as a non-antisemitic nation.

Therefore, this could be understood as a form of "caring racism", in reference to the work of scholars who have suggested that sometimes in contemporary Swedish discourses racism is paradoxically expressed through an alleged care for those who are subjected to racism (D. Mulinari and Neergaard 2013). In this case, though, racism is directed against a Muslim "Other" through a notion of care for a Jewish "Other", implying a triangular relation with "Swedishness". In that sense, Swedish "care" or "national philosemitism" resembles both homonationalist and femonationalist

discourses, in which the categories of queer people and women, respectively, are portrayed as under threat from a Muslim "Other", and can be protected only by the allegedly gender-equal and queer-friendly European nation-states. This paternalistic attitude, in which phantasies of gender and sexuality are at the core, implies a notion of a progressive and caring Sweden, protective of minoritised groups but in a way that does not challenge its racist, sexist or homophobic structures. Instead, by projecting those structures onto the Muslim "Other", it conceals those structures and makes it harder to detect and identify them, including racism against Jews.

One could also ask what the boundaries are for this Swedish "care" for the Jewish "Other". Or in other words, is this "care" temporary? Although I agree with Bachner's (1999) assertion that since World War II public and overt anti-Jewish racism has been rendered illegitimate, it remains an open question as to what implications this will have for anti-Jewish racism in Sweden in the long run, particularly at a political conjuncture where the importance of national boundary-drawing is emphasised in political discourses and policies. Will Sweden continue to "care" for the Jewish "Other", reinforcing its ambivalent position?

## It is entangled with anti-Muslim racism

The third specificity in contemporary anti-Jewish racism in Sweden is its complex entanglements with anti-Muslim racism. One obvious aspect of this is the centrality of Israel-Palestine to contemporary discussions about and understandings of anti-Jewish racism. As already discussed, this implies that less attention is paid to anti-Jewish racism in relation to constructions of "Swedishness". But beyond that, this also implies that Jews and Muslims are constructed as antagonistic categories, that opposition against anti-Jewish racism is understood to sometimes foster anti-Muslim racism (Bouteldja 2017) and that opposition against anti-Muslim racism can be understood as channelling anti-Jewish racism (J. Birnbaum 2017). The consequence of this is a construction of a racial triad with three points: Sweden as a "racialised community" (Sharma 2015), the Jewish "Other" and the Muslim "Other". In this scheme, both anti-Jewish racism and anti-Muslim racism complement each other for the construction of "Swedishness" as civilised, democratic and progressive. By constructing the Muslim "Other" as an enemy to those values, and by constructing the Jewish "Other" as in need of them, an exclusionary form of "Swedishness" is reinforced.

Thus, in this racial triad the categories of the Jewish "Other" and the Muslim "Other" are simultaneously constructed as both similar and antagonistic. They are similar because they are both located outside Protestant-secular

"Swedishness", and they are antagonistic because Sweden expresses "care" for the former, protecting it from the latter. Despite these central differences in the depiction of the categories of Muslims and Jews, however, the fact remains that Protestant-secular norms are exclusionary of both Muslims and Jews, as the discussion about circumcision in Chapter 5 shows. Therefore, the portrayal of Sweden as progressive and "caring" for the Jewish "Other" is insidious: Sweden cares for Jews as victims of the Holocaust or as threatened by Muslims; but if Jewish cultural-religious expressions challenge Swedish "sameness" and/or Protestant-secular norms, this "care" is less obvious, and what occurs is instead what in Chapter 10 was identified as Swedish white discomfort. It thus appears that the category of Jews is excluded from notions of "Swedishness" when it concerns Jews with a Jewish identity and/or who perform Jewish cultural-religious acts, since this implies an embodiment of "difference" that challenges national "sameness".

The discussion about the entanglements between anti-Jewish racism and anti-Muslim racism point to the centrality of the category of religion in the Swedish racial regime and its relation to "Swedishness". Regarding secularism as a cultural and discursive continuity of Protestantism (W. Brown, Butler, and Mahmood 2013), it is possible to identify the particularistic underpinnings of the universalist and secular ideology of "Swedish exceptionalism"—similar to other hegemonic nationalist narratives in what Balibar (1991) defines as "white nations". In that sense, the category of religion, in the form of Protestant secularism, is pivotal to hegemonic understandings of Swedish "belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2011) and hence also to racist and exclusionary policies and practices.

## A horizon of hope

In this dissertation, I have argued for the centrality of notions of "Swedishness" to explore contemporary anti-Jewish racism, but also that the entanglements between anti-Jewish racism and notions of "Swedishness" have changed over the past few decades, due to migration to Sweden from the Global South. By this migration, Swedish "sameness" has been challenged and the social pressure to assimilate to this "sameness" seems to have diminished. Despite hegemonic notions that this migration constitutes a threat against Jewish life in Sweden, it seems to have been beneficial to the Jewish population, both in the sense that it has made Jews "whiter" in relative terms, but also because it has opened up for greater possibilities of publicly displaying and living Jewishness in a context

where other racialised groups also display their "difference" from white Protestant-secular "Swedishness". Nevertheless, the public display of Jewishness continues to disrupt Swedish "sameness", creating Swedish white discomfort among the majoritarian population in Sweden.

In my view, the continuous challenge of Swedish "sameness", not least in terms of Protestant-secular norms, constitutes a promising feature of a future that is less racist against both Jews and other racialised, minoritised groups. This opens up for greater possibilities of Jewish life beyond a subtly nationalist Swedish "care" for a Jewish "Other" who is either reduced to victimhood and death, or who only exists in the context of being perceived as threatened by a Muslim "Other". The experience that several interviewees had of forming antiracist alliances, and their desire to use their Jewish identity as a starting point for a project of a conjoint learning and struggle against racism together with other racialised, minoritised groups, indicates an important antiracist potentiality. For this purpose, it is necessary not only to acknowledge both the commonalities and differences between the category of Jews and other racialised groups in Sweden, but also to move the gaze from the situation in Israel-Palestine to the racist structures in Swedish society, when antisemitism/anti-Jewish racism is being discussed. By doing this, it becomes possible for antiracists to deconstruct the notion of Jews and Muslims as antagonistic categories, to deconstruct the image of the struggles against anti-Jewish racism and against anti-Muslim racism as mutually exclusive, and to dismantle the image of Sweden as a non-racist, universalist and progressive nation. Endeavours in this direction can weaken hegemonic and racist notions of "Swedishness", challenge the nationalistic ideology of "Swedish exceptionalism", diminish the social pressure of Swedish "sameness", and open up for greater possibilities of a life beyond racism.

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